SCREEM

#12

MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATRE 3000
interview with
MIKE NELSON

FRANKENSTEIN MEETS the SPACEMONSTER

KILLER KID MOVIES

EQUINOX!

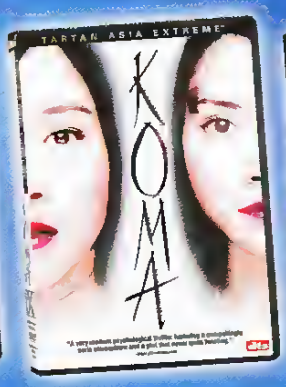
CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY With DEAD THINGS!

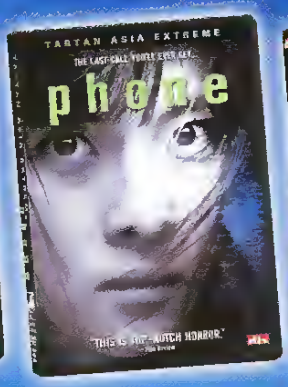
1 2>
74470 84559

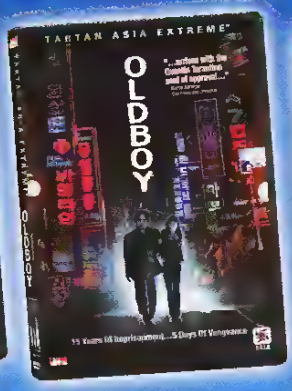
$7.95 USA
$9.95 Canada

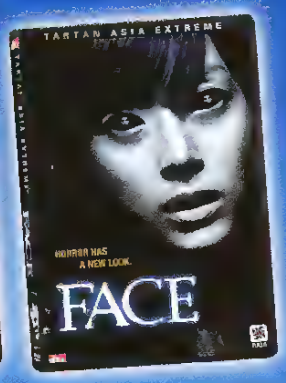
TARTAN ASIA EXTREME™ PRESENTS

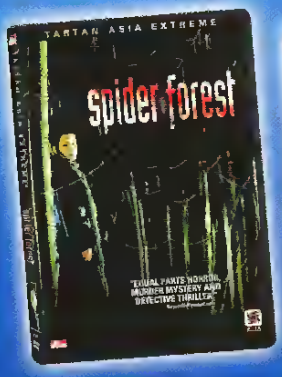
The most daring and cutting-edge horror, thriller and action films from Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and around the world.

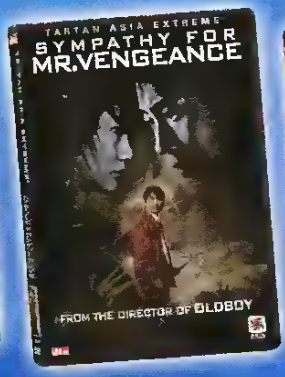


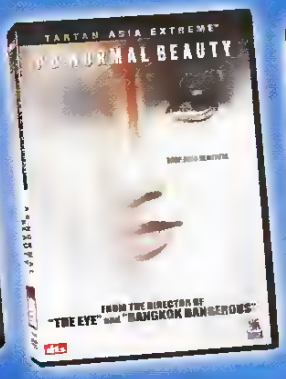


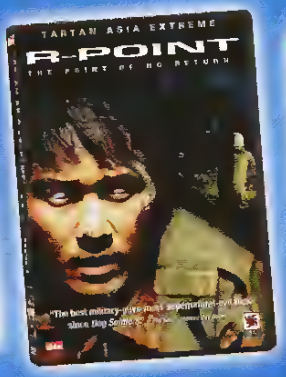


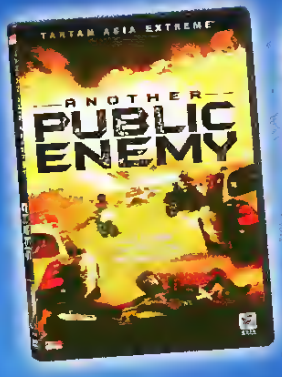


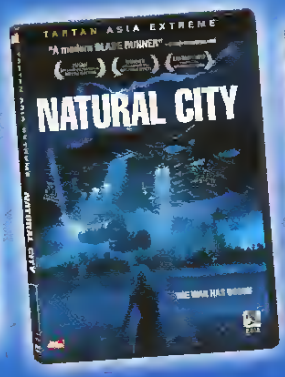


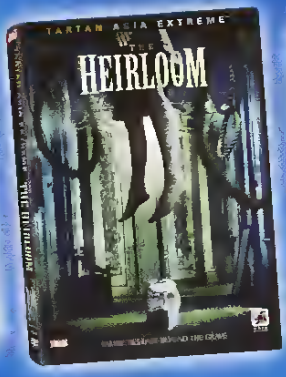












ASIA EXTREME

www.tartanvideousa.com

TARTAN VIDEO

© 2006 Tartan Video. All rights reserved.

SCREEM #12

COVER ARTWORK:

A zombie from *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* comes out of his grave for our summer issue. Another brilliant Bill Chancellor creation!

CONTENTS

THE HORROR FILM TRILOGY OF ALAN ORMSBY	2
ALFREDO SALAZAR: THE OTHER BROTHER	4
A CHAT WITH LAWRENCE D. FOLDES	6
EQUINOX GETS THE CRITERION TREATMENT	11
MICHEL LEVESQUE INTERVIEW	19
KILLER KID MOVIES	24
MIKE NELSON: LIFE AFTER THE SATELLITE OF LOVE	28
FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE SPACE MONSTER	31
THE WALERIAN BOROWCZYK COLLECTION	33
PLEASURES OF THE DAMNED	35
JOHN S. RAD'S *DANGEROUS MEN*	38
TALKIN' TRASH WITH GIUSEPPE ANDREWS	41
DVD REVIEWS	43
DVD QUICKIES	63

Writers this issue:
Greg Goodsell, David Wilt, Adam Bialek, Ed Santo, Blake Monahan, Robert Craig, Joe Wawrzyniak, Lorne Marshall, Shane M. Dallmann, Andy Johansen, Darryl Mayeski

Artists: Bill Chancellor, Bob Genewski

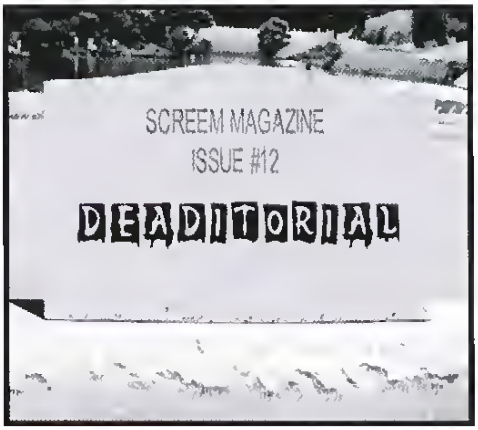
VISIT THE SCREEM WEB SITE!

WWW.SCREEMAG.COM

Advertising inquiries:
Phone (570) 592- 8125

All contents © 2006 Screem Publishing. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or part without written permission from the editor.

Single copy $7.95 U.S.A. $9.95 Canada. Dealer inquiries welcome.
Screem Magazine, 41 Mayer St., Wilkes Barre, PA 18702. All photos used are for promotional purposes, and are owned by their respective companies.



It seems like it took forever for the warm weather to arrive on the east coast, but here it is, and our blazing red hot cover sets the mood for the 12th issue of *Screem*. You may be one of the lucky readers who were fortunate to snag a free DVD in this issue, which comes courtesy of Tartan films. It consists of trailers from several fantastic movies from the company's Asia Extreme collection. If you didn't receive a disc, don't frown, you still have a chance to win a free Tartan DVD in our contest found on page 54.

I take pride in each and every name that contributes to *Screem*. We've added several new writers this time around. Joe Wawrzyniak's work has appeared in *Cult Movies* magazine. Joe also has his own music column for *Jersey Beat*. Don't miss his *Killer Kid Movies* article! Shane M. Dallmann is a busy guy. Not only does he write for *Video Watchdog*, but he transforms himself into Remo D, a horror host on the long-running cable access show, *Remo D's Manor of Mathem*. (Catch it for free at ampmedia.org.) I'm honored to have Shane aboard! Adam Bialek is new to *Screem*, however, Adam is not a rookie by any means. I think readers will be pleasantly surprised with his spot-on film reviews. We hope to have him back for our 13th issue. Lorne Marshall's phenomenal dissection of *Equinox* is stunning. When word got out that Lorne's article was to be in this issue, I received several enquiring e-mails from readers all over the globe! The anticipation certainly paid off, as you'll see in his extensive piece.

Contrary to rumors, I will not be changing the name of this publication to *Greg Goodsell presents Screem magazine*. However, it is true that he has been cloned. In this issue alone, Greg interviewed Alan Ormsby, Mike Nelson, Lawrence D. Foldes, Michel Levesque, John S. Rad, and the guys who made *Pleasures of the Damned*. Greg also wrote several film reviews, but I bet that you didn't know that he wrote this editorial too! (okay, maybe not). Greg is certainly my driving force. Without him, I would be publishing the *Screem* newsletter! David Wilt is back again (in tine form, with a look at the films of Alfredo Salazaar), as are *Screem* regulars, Andy Johansen (from Denmark, not Sweden as I mistakenly said last issue!), our good pal Ed Santo, the always colorful Rob Craig, and my friend Blake Monahan, who is now working at Troma films!

I'd also like to thank our advertisers, almost everyone who placed an ad in issue #11 has come back for our twelfth outing—Something Weird Video, Chiller Theatre, Dark Sky Films, Diabolik DVD, Unearthly Video and Cinema Wasteland.

It takes a lot of dedication and support from many people to make *Screem* happen. My wife Karen doesn't get enough credit, but it is her work that oversees EVERYTHING here. You can't have enough friends in this world, and I'm especially grateful to know Bill Chancellor (our cover artist!), Kevin Clement, and Shade Rupe. We'd also like to thank Debbi Berlin, Mana Mason, Mike & Lisa at Something Weird Video, Bill Lustig, Tony Simonelli, Mark Hutzky, Steve Puchalski, Joe Hauze, Blythe Evans, Dave Baumiller, Ted Bohus, Ken Kish, Eric Caiden, Mark Bailey, Bruce Holecheck, Dan Taylor, George Garrett, Ed Peters, Sue Procko, Ben Pavolic, Chris Hester, Don May, Andy Starke and the folks at Mondo Macabro, Sheree Johnson and Lion's Gate Films, Clint Weiler, Brian Carmody at Criterion, Steve Leaf, Mike Lafranier, Nico B., Poker Industries, Mike Yurcho, the staff at Corcoran Printing, and anyone else who helped to make *Screem* #12 a reality.

We want to hear from you! New and old readers alike, please let me know what you think of this issue. It's important to have feedback. Tell us what features you like or what you think we should shelve.

If you're a writer who'd like to contribute to future issues of *Screem*, drop us a line at *Screem Magazine*, 41 Mayer St., Wilkes Barre, PA 18702 or send an e-mail to SCREEMAG@AOL.COM

Enjoy the magazine!

Darryl Mayeski
Editor

The Horror Film Trilogy of Alan Ormsby

ARTICLE BY GREG GOODSELL

Modern day Hollywood could—and eventually will remake every single horror film made in the Seventies, and they still won't get it. Today's filmmakers relish technical skill and prowess over what made these films endearing in the first place, that elusive quality that can only be described as character. These reckless, go-for-broke features were made by indolent young pups without a background in conventional movie making, all intent on provoking, shocking and meeting the demands of the grind house and drive-in patron. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Last House on the Left* (1972), countless others were made without the benefit of CGI, the internet and digital technology. There was an unspoken, tacit agreement between the movie makers and their target audience that their features would transcend their budgetary and technical limitations to give the crowds the frisson denied them in ordinary cinema.

The undead run amok in *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things*.

A case in point are the three films associated with Alan Ormsby, *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* (1971), *Deathdream* (aka *Dead of Night* 1972) and *Deranged* (1974). While Ormsby has worked as an actor (as in *Children*), a makeup man, and a director (*Deranged* with Jeff Gillen), he is primarily known as a screenwriter. His introduction to the world of low budget filmmaking was on *Children*, perhaps the world's first—and certainly not the last "zombie comedy."

Ormsby was a drama student at the University of Florida in the early Seventies when he was introduced to director Bob Clark. "We were in college together," Ormsby says. Clark had already directed the incredible fetishistic transvestite opus *She Man* in 1967 (available from Something Weird Video).

Ormsby was a college student and doing paste-up and illustrations for a local black newspaper when *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) began to hit the midnight movie circuit heavily. Ormsby and Clark, along with several other interested parties, began to toy with the idea of making a low-budget horror film. "We consciously imitated *Night of the Living Dead*." Clark came up with the unforgettable title, and the group was in business.

"The budget was low . . . maybe 50 grand. I don't remember the shooting schedule." *Children* was shot on an island in Biscayne Bay in August and September of 1971, where the cast and crew had to contend with flesh-eating bugs and mosquitoes rather than the cannibalistic undead seen in the film. *Children* focuses on an insufferably pretentious theatrical group isolated on a Florida island as they perform a mock satanic resurrection ceremony.

They get more than what they bargained for, with a mass uprising of the dead at the film's finale. Ormsby plays the troupe's leader under his real name of "Alan." Other members of the troupe include Ormsby's then-wife Anya Ormsby as "Anya," his ex-girlfriend Valerie Mamches, his then son-in-law Paul Cronin, and longtime associate Jeff Gillen. Director Clark insisted that the actors use their real first names to help in the editing stages, but went under the name of "Benjamin" Clark in the credits! Ormsby and Mamches had allegedly broken up under unhappy circumstances prior to shooting, perhaps explaining the pointed barbs she hurls at him throughout the film.

Children is remarkable for being among the first in a long string of zombie films that tried to capitalize on the success of *Night of the Living Dead*. Other outstanding aspects of the ragtag production are the highly effective living dead make-up created by Ormsby, constructed from latex and toilet paper. The scene where the corpses come tearing through the earth of the cemetery (a creation of Styrofoam headstones by art director Jeff Tremble) is straight from the pages of an EC horror comic.

The most written about aspect of *Children*, however, remain the costumes that Ormsby and his fellow thespians were forced to wear. On the tail-end of the hippie era in fashion, Ormsby says the clothes were bought straight off the rack from the nearby JC Penney. Ormsby is quite a vision in black, red and white striped jeans, orange shirt and red scarf. Macho Jeff Gillen wears a pink and white T-shirt and lime green pants, and poor Anya is reduced to wearing an orange and red sack dress!

Ormsby is upfront about *Children's* shortcomings . . . not enough action until the very end, and reams of risible dialogue hand-written by director Clark. In spite of some gore and scenes of implied gay necrophilia (!), *Children* squeaked by with a "PG" rating. The film did well theatrically, although it didn't translate into cash right away for the participants . . . "Profit? You're kidding, right?" Ormsby laughs. There was discussion of a sequel, titled *We Told You . . . Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things*, which was never realized.

A young Alan Ormsby realizes that zombies don't have a sense of humor. From *Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things*.

Spotted among *Children's* legion of undead is a Vietnam War soldier in full military regalia, which dovetails very nicely into Ormsby's follow-up horror script *Deathdream* (1972). Known under a plethora of titles, *Deathdream* was also callled *The Veteran*, *Lazarus* and *The Night Walker* in scripting and pre-production. This unusually strong horror film follows the homecoming of a small town boy following his tour of duty in Vietnam. Andy (Richard Backus) returns to his mom (Lynn Carlin) and dad (John Marley) and sister (Anya Ormsby). (He literally looks a little green around the gills.) The tight-knit clan all too happily dismisses the official notice by the state department that their son was killed in action, while Andy takes to wearing gloves and dark sunglasses to hide his deteriorating flesh. Since this film features the debut of a young makeup artist by the name of Tom Savini, there's plenty of that red stuff to keep crowds happy.

Ormsby says that *Deathdream*, directed by Clark (who cameos in the film as a police officer) is inspired by the classic short story, "The Monkey's Paw," as well the Irwin Shaw play, *Bury the Dead*. The film addresses the high price war places on civilian lives, as well as depicting one of the most dysfunctional families ever. Dad is an abusive drunk, mom is a controlling, domineering shrew; and sis double-dates with Andy for nights at the drive-in passion pit. Ormsby consciously brought these elements into the script. "The Vietnam War brought out the stresses in the family that were already there."

Andy is shown injecting the blood of his victims with a hypodermic needle in a bid to prolong his undead status. This was an intentional comment on the fact that many Vietnam veterans returned to the states as heroin addicts. Ormsby doesn't know if *Deathdream* could be remade today's political climate, estimating it was easier to come out against the Vietnam War than the conflict in Iraq. He doesn't know if it would work with "somebody coming back from Iraq as a zombie."

Ormsby and crew had debuted with *Children*, a comedy, moved on to a bleak vision of America with *Deathdream* . . . and saved the best for last, *Deranged* (1974), an extremely bleak vision of America that is an out-and-out comedy! Given that it is a faithful retelling of the Ed Gein story with dollops of droll humor, *Deranged* is as perfect a film as one could hope for. Directed by Jeff Gillen and Ormsby, Roberts Blossom stars as Ezra Cobb, a rural bumpkin, who promises his domineering mother (Cosette Lee) on her death bed to avoid women. Finding bachelor life too much to bear, he exhumes "Ma Cobb's" corpse, and attends to her at home with do-it-yourself taxidermy and embalming skills. Exhuming the local graveyard for lady companions and bits of décor, he goes on a disastrous date with a phony medium (Marion Waldman) that ends in her murder. Newly incensed with blood lust, he similarly dispatches a blowsy barmaid and dry goods clerk before being discovered by the townspeople.

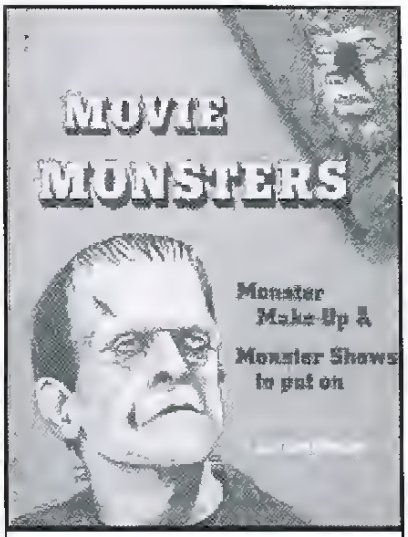
Andy is about to go home. From *Deathdream*, available on DVD from Blue Underground.

Lensed in rural Canada in the dead of winter, *Deranged* paints a very unhappy picture of American rural life. Nosy neighbors, sex-starved widows, monstrous mothers and misunderstood psychopaths are all underscored with the country spiritual "Old Rugged Cross" played on an asthmatic pipe organ. Tom Savini returns again with some very impressive corpses and gore effects. And you have to love any movie where the hero talks to his mother's corpse about the mental stability of his girlfriend over a supper of fried chicken dipped in peanut butter.

Upstaged by *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* the same year, *Deranged* faithfully follows the Gein story with only one notable exception—Gein, unlike Ezra (or Norman Bates in *Psycho* for that matter) left his mother's corpse undisturbed. This single detail was insisted upon by producer Tom Karr, which along with name and location changes, kept the film from certain "legal issues" tied to the real-life case. This writer asked Ormsby if *Deranged's* long takes and bone-dry humor may be too sophisticated for the average horror fan. "I can't answer for the average horror fan, but the movie seems to have a following. Without the humor, it would have been unwatchable."

Blossom would later enjoy mainstream success in John Hughes' *Home Alone* (1990) as Macaulay Culkin's gruff next-door neighbor. Ormsby says of Blossom, "We did another movie together that has never been released, but I haven't seen him since then."

Ormsby and his cohorts would go on to mainstream success. Bob Clark would go on to helm the *Porky's* (1981) series, with *Porky's II* making a backhanded reference to *Children* with a corpse resurrection joke. Clark is perhaps best loved for the seasonal favorite film, *A Christmas Story* (1983)—Jean Shepherd's reminisces of his boyhood that is nonetheless brimming with black humor. Make-up artist Savini would enjoy "Guru of Gore" status with his work with director George Romero. Sadly, Jeff Gillen made only a few appearances as an actor in the *Police Academy* series before dying of a heart attack in 1995.



Alan Ormsby's monster make-up book (1976).

Ormsby would leave the film industry for a brief flirtation with the toy business, where he quickly found it "to be just as rancid as show business." Divorcing Anya in 1981, Ormsby's next big screenplay was the incongruous feel-good favorite *My Bodyguard* the same year. Ormsby doesn't feel it was that big of a change, saying that "high school is scarier than any horror film."

Ormsby's next horror screenplay was the rather benighted, big-budget remake of *Cat People* (1982) with Nastassja Kinski. Directed by Paul Schraeder with explicit gore and sexuality, the film was recalled chiefly for its David Bowie theme song "Putting Out Fire with Gasoline." Ormsby likes the film. "It has its pluses and its minuses. I've grown quite fond of it, actually. I think it's probably underrated."

Roberts Blossom shares a few secrets with his mom and her friend in *Deranged* (1974).

Ormsby would also co-write and direct the three-films-within-a-film, the slasher parody *Popcorn* (1991), for which he was never given proper credit. Ormsby cites "creative differences" for the snub. More amazingly, Ormsby was one of many hands in crafting the screenplay for Walt Disney's feature-length animated film *Mulan* (1998)! As to his specific contributions to the film, Ormsby says it's "impossible to say; I was one of many, many people who worked on the film. Animated features aren't 'written' in the conventional sense."

Ormsby continues to write screenplays and has several films to his credit. When asked if he misses the seat-of-your-pants nature of independent filmmaking, he says, "its fun when you're young. It would be more fun if I shared in the profits now." He adds words of warning to others headed down the same path. "Beware of friends bearing contracts. Ignore all flattery. Always consult an attorney before you sign anything. Be willing to say no . . ."

THE TERROR-ABEL TWO'S

ALFREDO SALAZAR, THE OTHER BROTHER

ARTICLE BY DAVID WILT

Fans of Mexican horror movies are probably familiar with the name Abel Salazar, producer-star of *El barón del terror* (aka The Brainiac), *El vampiro*, *El ataúd del vampiro* (The Vampire's Coffin), *El hombre y el monstruo* (The Man and The Monster), and other classic pictures. However, the name of Abel's younger brother, Alfredo Salazar, may not ring as many bells. Nonetheless, a quick glance at Alfredo Salazar's list of credits—as director and screenwriter—reveals his significant influence on the fantasy film genre in Mexico. He should receive at least partial credit for creating the Aztec Mummy and the Wrestling Women, as well as numerous werewolves, vampires, transvestite ghosts, lecherous hippies and bikers, masked superheroes, and other south of the border movie characters.

Alfredo Salazar Garcia was born in Mexico City on 17 March 1922 (Abel was five years older). He began working in the film industry in the 1940s, and received his first script credit in 1947. While many of Alfredo's credits in his first 15 years as a writer were on movies produced by and/or starring his brother, he worked many times for other companies (his most consistent employer was Cinematográfica Calderón, purveyor of screen nudity, low humor, and horror for more than 30 years). An early Salazar fantasy credit was the screen story for *La bruja* (The Witch, 1954), one of Chano Urueta's two seminal Mexican horror movies (along with *El monstruo resucitado*, 1953). These pictures were precursors to the wave of Mexican fantasy films sparked by *Ladrón de cadáveres* (1956) and *El vampiro* (1957).

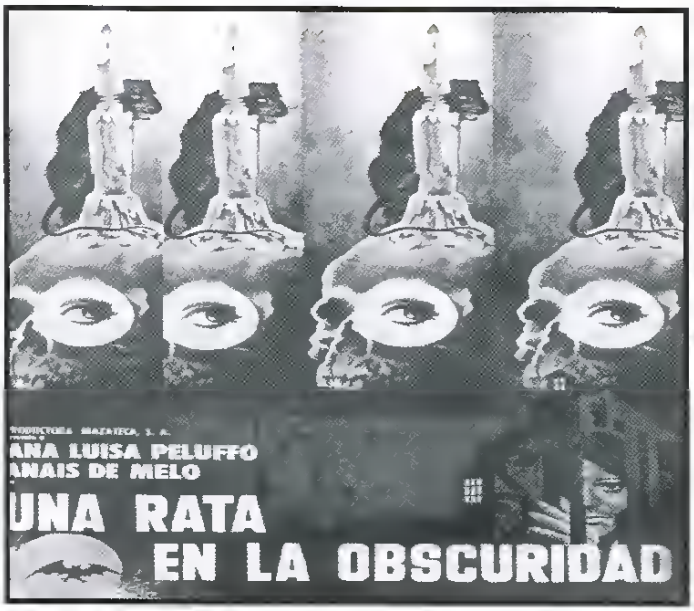
Alfredo Salazar soon became one of the genre's preferred writers. In 1957--the first full year of the Mexican horror wave--he wrote *El ataúd del vampiro* (the sequel to *El vampiro*), three Aztec Mummy pictures, and an "invisible man" film, *El hombre que logró ser invisible* (aka The New Invisible Man). Although nearly half of all his credits were fantasy films, Salazar scripted numerous Westerns, musicals, comedies, and the occasional drama during his long career. He continued to work on horror movies during the boom period, writing *El hombre y el monstruo* (The Man and the Monster, 1958), *El mundo de los vampiros* (World of the Vampires, 1960), *Muñecos infernales* (aka Curse of the Doll People, 1960), and *Frankenstein, el vampiro y compañía* (Frankenstein, the Vampire, and Company, 1960).

Salazar's screenplays often mixed themes from Hollywood (and other foreign) pictures with Mexican elements. *El hombre que logró ser invisible* borrows its basic plot from *The Invisible Man Returns* (1940). *Los pistoleros* (The Gunmen, 1961) is a thinly-disguised version of the oft-filmed "Gunfight at the O.K. Corral" story, and *Frankenstein, el vampiro y compañia* is a close remake of *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948). *Santo y Blue Demon contra Drácula y el Hombre Lobo* drew on *Dracula--Prince of Darkness* for its gory means of reviving a decomposed vampire. *La isla de los dinosaurios* (The Island of the Dinosaurs, 1966) was scripted by Salazar to utilize stock footage from *One Million B.C.* (1940). Jorge Rivero's character in *Peor que los buitres* (1973) was clearly inspired by Tom Laughlin's *Billy Jack* (right down to the goofy hat).

In 1962, Salazar and producer Guillermo Calderón initiated the "Luchadoras" (Wrestling Women) series with *Las luchadoras vs. el médico asesino* (aka Doctor of Doom). With the exception of the non-fantasy *Las lobas del ring* (1964), all of the Luchadoras movies were scripted by Salazar. He also wrote *La Mujer Murciélago* (Bat Woman, 1967), whose curvaceous heroine (Maura Monti) was a lady wrestler and masked crime-fighter. The screenplay for *El horripilante bestia humana* (aka Night of the Bloody Apes, 1968), an unofficial Luchadoras film, was credited on-screen to René Cardona Sr. and his son René Jr., but Alfredo Salazar was the production manager and some sources indicate he wrote the picture as well (in any case, the plot is stitched together from elements of the earlier Luchadoras movies). The Wrestling Women series (and the unofficial entries) combined the popular *lucha* genre with horror movie thrills and sex appeal (although the actual *luchadoras* doing the ring work weren't quite as attractive as actresses Elizabeth Campbell, Lorena Velazquez, Ariadne Welter, Regina Torné, or Malú Reyes).

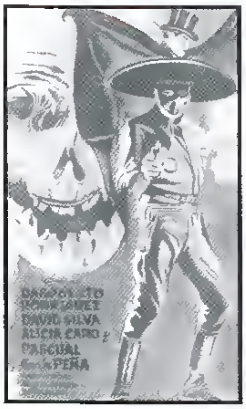
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Alfredo Salazar may have been the king of script recycling, using the same plot elements three, four, even five times! His most frequently used screen story started life as *La momia azteca*, was elaborated in *El mundo de los vampiros*, took a brief detour to *Las luchadoras contra la momia*, before morphing into *Las mujeres panteras*, then *Santo en el tesoro de Drácula*, and finally winding up as *Santo y Blue Demon contra Drácula y el Hombre Lobo* (1974's *La venganza de la Llorona* also uses a lot of Salazar's basic plot, but he isn't credited, ironically). Take a monster (or two), a family curse (and/or reincarnation), add a piece of jewelry or some other object (Aztec breastplate, dagger, sword, medallion) that is the key to some secret treasure (or the means to destroying the monster), place a little girl in danger, have one of the good guys (or gals) seduced by one of the villains, and *voilà*! Just plug in a different monster (vampire, mummy, panther women, werewolf) and a different protagonist (scientist, masked superhero, wrestling women) to make a "new" movie.



Alfredo Salazar, although never a starring actor like Abel, did beat his older brother to the punch when it came to directing, making *El Charro de las calaveras* (The Charro of the Skulls) in 1965 (Abel Salazar didn't helm his first feature until 1967 due to union restrictions). Although the exact details of the production are not known, it's clear the opening section was shot some time before the latter two-thirds. The first episode may have been a TV pilot or a demo to raise funds—the "name" players (David Silva, Alicia Caro) appear in this part only, and "star" Dagoberto Rodriguez's face is shown just once here, and not at all in the rest of the movie (the Charro is mostly played by a stuntman, although Rodriguez seems to have dubbed the character's dialogue). The fact that the Charro has a different juvenile sidekick in the second two stories is briefly explained away, but the change in the Charro's costume between episodes is not mentioned!

El Charro de las calaveras, made on the fringes of the film industry, was shot entirely on location in the provinces and is very cheap (Salazar has a cameo role as the vampire's first victim, probably to save hiring another actor rather than a Hitchcockian desire to appear in his own movie). It isn't, however, dull. The first story includes a werewolf, a witch, and a talking corpse; the second has male and female vampires, the third features a headless horseman, a talking head (they are soon reunited), and two skull-faced henchmen in monks' robes (eventually zapped by lightning bolts sent by God). The script has a few interesting touches, including the shocking murder of a young boy's mother (Alicia Caro) by her werewolf-husband. As a director, Salazar's debut is adequate--he would prove to be a competent, but only occasionally stylish technician in his future efforts.



Charro's monster make-up varies: the werewolf mask is stiff and resembles an irate pirate more than a wolfman, the vampire's face looks like an aged monkey sucking on a lemon, and the headless horseman's head is a ludicrous dime-store rubber mask. However, coming from an industry not known for its special effects or makeup prowess (off-the-shelf Don Post monster masks show up in more than one feature!), the monsters in *El Charro de las calaveras* aren't that bad, and they are pretty active and belligerent.

After *El Charro de las calaveras*, Alfredo Salazar waited five years before getting another chance to direct. He then made four movies for Calderon in six years. *Juventud desnuda* (Naked Youth, 1970), *Bikinis y rock* (1972), *Peor que los buitres* (Worse Than Vultures, 1973), and *La Virgen de Guadalupe* (The Virgin of Guadalupe, 1976). *Juventud desnuda* is an indictment of parents who fail to supervise their teenage children, which leads to cigarette smoking and alcohol abuse, rock music, parties where young people strip to their underwear, and (eventually) homicide. Sadly, many video copies omit the "naked" part of *Juventud desnuda*, snipping the central nude scene of busty actress Ivonne Govea. [A trivia note: "Sugar, Sugar," a hit for The Archies in the USA, can be heard twice (performed by the "Music Pop Team") in the picture.] *Bikinis y rock* was a remake of a movie Salazar had scripted a decade before: hippies and rock music (performed by three real-life Mexican bands) contemporize a comedy about rival bathing-suit companies. In *Peor que los buitres* Jorge Rivero is held hostage by a biker gang (led by Armando Silvestre, his hair dyed blonde for the role) trying to cross the desert after a payroll robbery. Salazar works in a fair amount of nudity and some violence, although the puny dirt bikes ridden by the gang don't exactly make them Hell's Angels. Completely reversing Calderón's tendency towards sensationalism, *La Virgen de Guadalupe* retells the story of the miraculous appearance of the Virgin Mary to Juan Diego in colonial Mexico.

Alfredo Salazar smiles for the camera.

In 1978, Salazar made a "chili Western," *Lo blanco, lo rojo y lo negro* (The White, the Red, and the Black) and what may be his masterpiece, *Una rata en la obscuridad* (A Rat in the Darkness). Starring Ana Luisa Peluffo and Anaís de Melo--both of whom get naked more than once--this outrageous ghost story also features Ricardo Cortés (the nebbishy male lead of *Bikinis y rock*) as a vengeful transvestite spirit who dominates, has sex with, and then murders female tenants of his spooky mansion. The twist ending includes a rather lingering look at the actor's naughty bits, just to make sure the audience "got" the idea that he's a man (although why a ghost would wear a wig, rubber falsies, and a negligee isn't clear: couldn't he just use magic to look like a woman?). The special effects aren't elaborate but are effective, and the house itself is nicely creepy. Salazar resists the urge to provide any sort of back-story or explanation for the supernatural goings-on, allowing viewers to speculate among themselves. Is the killer really a ghost, and if not, what's causing the flying furniture and kitchen utensils, the demonic possession of de Melo's character, the weird noises, etc.?

Salazar's last two movies were made for media conglomerate Televisa: *Te solté la rienda* (I Loosed Your Reins, 1980) and *No vale nada la vida* (Life Is Worth Nothing, 1982). These were routine vehicles for *ranchera* singer Humberto Cabañas and demonstrate Salazar's technical prowess as a director-for-hire but are hardly personal projects. After completing these projects, Alfredo Salazar retired from the industry. However, he left behind an impressive list of more than 50 screen credits, among them many good examples of the Mexican fantasy film.

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO GO NEAR THE PARK . . . A CHAT WITH DIRECTOR LAWRENCE D. FOLDES

By Greg Goodsell

Filmmaker Lawrence D. Foldes takes it all in stride that the film he wishes to be remembered by, along with the film that he would rather forget are both making their debuts on DVD at approximately the same time. Foldes' *Finding Home* (2005), a soul-stirring drama starring Genevieve Bujold and Louise Fletcher has been winning praise at film festivals across the nation. When it comes to readers of this magazine, however, Foldes is more closely identified with the berserk horror thriller *Don't Go Near the Park* (1980), a haphazard mixture of grand ideas and technical incompetence that continues to stun viewers. Released to home video under myriad titles, Psychotronic Video's Michael Weldon warns against watching *Park* with a hangover.

Now out on DVD courtesy of Dark Sky Pictures, Foldes is amazed at the response that *Park* has gotten over the years. Foldes says the film is what it is, but makes no apologies for his directorial debut which he accomplished at the tender age of 19. More remarkable still is that *Park* is Foldes' second feature. *Malibu High* (1979), a rough and tough sexploitation film, served as his baptism into the world of film production. Other films in his filmography are of varying quality and radically different subject matter, but all keep their promise to surprise the viewer. In particular, his *Young Warriors* (1983) begins as an *Animal House* (1978) styled comedy only to turn into a rape-revenge melodrama, finally exploding in an apocalyptic finale.

Speaking from his Hollywood home, Foldes gave this writer a highly illuminating tour of his eclectic Hollywood career.

A STUDENT OF FILM

Befitting an oeuvre that managed to employ tinseltown's highest and lowliest hands, Foldes was born and raised in Los Angeles. "Filmmaking was something that I wanted to do as far back as I can remember. I think it goes back to when I was in elementary school. I was born here in Los Angeles. My parents came here from Hungary in 1956 during the revolution. My grandfather, I remember, would come out and meet me every day after school. Instead of going home, the two of us would get on the 91 bus, and we would go down to Hollywood Boulevard, and I would go with him to at least two or three films a day before going home. What was neat about it was that he didn't speak any English at all, and he would go to any movie that I wanted to see. I could get in to see everything, any R-rated films, whatever. We would go and see anything and everything," Foldes says.

"We would sit in the back row because I would translate the film for him into Hungarian. Because he was hard of hearing, I used to do it kind of loud. So I would sit there with him and translate it, and when the movie was really bad or I got bored with it, I would just change the story and would just make something up, and he didn't know the difference! I maybe think I even made it better . . ." Foldes laughs.

Hoping to escape the sleaze in Hollywood, the Foldes clan moved to Lake Arrowhead when Lawrence was ready to start high school. "My father decided to move the entire family up there to escape the sex and drug scene in Hollywood. What he didn't realize was that at Lake Arrowhead, there was nothing to do but drugs and sex." With only one movie theater in town showing second or third-run features, Foldes went into serious withdrawal. As is the case with many souls faced with adversity, Foldes set his sights on entering the film world by any means possible.

"I only had one year of high school, and I took a proficiency exam and got the hell out of there." Foldes moved to San Bernardino, and got his general education classes out of the way. He then applied to several film schools. Foldes only lasted a month at the University of Southern California, with its overcrowded classrooms and students fighting over the meager equipment available. "All the undergraduates were expected to start in 8 mm, and the first things I shot were in 16 mm. I didn't want to take a step back."

Foldes had much better luck at the prestigious California Institute for the Arts, or Cal Arts. There were much smaller classrooms and ample equipment. More importantly, the instructors there acted as mentors. "My directing mentor was Alexander 'Sandy' Mackendrick, who directed Alec Guinness in *The Man in the White Suit* (1951)." Freed from the strictures of more basic classes, Foldes took nothing but film classes for his two years there.

"The only thing that was really disturbing at Cal Arts was the focus of a lot of the students, everything there was 'filmmaking as an art.' Business has nothing to do with it, this is an art form, and it was treated that way. They did stuff that was bizarre. They had screenings of some of the student films and I remember sitting in one, and it was dots on a blank screen, bouncing around. And then it was over and there was enormous applause and cheering, and I was 'what the hell is this?'" A similar scene pops up in Foldes' later epic, *Young Warriors*.

Foldes then transferred to the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, which was the polar opposite of Cal Arts. Brooks' emphasis in film classes was financing, budgeting and scheduling. Foldes graduated from Brooks when he was 18. Bound and determined, Foldes decided against starting at the bottom by working in an agency mail room or as a lowly go-fer on a movie set. Foldes would produce his first film at the age of 18, the notorious sleaze-film epic *Malibu High* (1979).

MALIBU HIGH

"I went and talked to every distributor that I could. And I went and I said, 'Look, I'm getting ready to do a low-budget exploitation movie. And I asked them what types of movies they were distributing. After talking to Sam Arkoff, Roger Corman and Mark Tenser, I found out that teen beach movies were really working at the time." A suitable script was found, and Foldes and company set out to make a beach movie. However, *Malibu High* was anything but a fun-in-the-sun film.

People who went to *Malibu High* expecting sun, silliness and sex, were instead confronted by an angry examination of teenage angst. "The original titles for the film were *High School Hit Girl*, *Death in Denim* and *Lovely But Deadly*," Foldes explains. *Malibu High's* heroine, high school senior Kim Bentley (Jill Lansing), has a bad attitude that grows increasingly worse. Jilted by her boyfriend and still smarting from the suicide of her father, she's flunking out of school until she hits upon the idea of seducing her teachers. Short of cash, she hooks up with two-bit pimp Tony (Al Mannino, aka Alex Mann of *I Drink Your Blood*) and begins pulling trains at construction sites. Buying a sports car and new clothes with her ill-gotten gains, she tells her mother (Phyllis Benson), "I tell you, I'm doing relief work!" She moves on to bigger and better things with an even bigger pimp, who then employs her for mob hits. Despite the connotations of the title, the beach only serves as the scene of a nasty triple homicide at the film's conclusion.

Directed by Texas regional filmmaker Irv Berwick (*Hitch Hike to Hell* and *Monster From Piedras Blancas*), *Malibu High* has many things in common with other exploitation film fare of this era. There are loads of unintentional hilarity and crude technical detail, and at one point, the theme song from TV's *The People's Court* yammers away in the background. But there's no denying the sleazy power it generates. The scene where a topless Patty taunts her school principal as he expires from a heart attack at her feet is as rough as any other film of its particular type. Director John Landis reportedly loves the film, and pronounced it "a film noir in broad daylight" and critic Kevin Thomas of the *Los Angeles Times* found *Malibu High* "compelling . . . calls to mind (Francois Truffaut's) *Adele H.*"

Shot around various Southern California locales with some interior sets at the Brooks Institute, *Malibu High* cost $56,000 to make after Foldes' accountant father set up limited partnerships (he maintains executive producer credit on many of his son's movies). Foldes then shopped the film to distributors, where it was picked up by Mark Tenser of Crown International Pictures. Foldes was ushered into Tenser's office where the distributor sat behind a huge wooden desk chomping on a cigar. He was presented a check for $30,000 and was instructed to sign a thick contract manually typed on legal-sized paper. Tenser waved Foldes away from reading the contract, saying it was "just boiler plate." It was among his first encounters with the workings of Hollywood. Foldes estimates that the film had three theatrical re-releases and grossed upwards of more than $10 million. Foldes says he still receives checks from the film to this day, "and the success of that film paved the way for the other movies I made."

Malibu High had an unexpected life as inadvertent bachelor pad décor. The classically misleading one-sheet, which sells the film as a soft core sex romp and features a semi-nude beach bunny with the slogan—"Every Teacher In School Wanted to FLUNK HER . . . But Nobody Dared!"—wound up being stolen from theater display cases, and warranted a mention on The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson. "I turn on The Tonight Show, and there is Johnny Carson . . . alongside a poster for *Malibu High*!" Foldes laughs.

DON'T GO NEAR THE PARK (1980)

Foldes' directorial debut proved to be quite unforgettable. Orson Welles directed *Citizen Kane* (1940) at the age of 26, belying his youth with a film of depth and complexity. Foldes directed *Don't* Go *Near the Park* at the age of 19, which also has depth and complexity . . . and, uh . . .

"What happened was that I wanted to do another film that was going to work commercially, and other than the beach movies, the horror movies were really working. I wanted to come up with a horror script. I had a friend of mine, Lynwood Chase, that had this concept, and it was actually a rather sophisticated concept. He was telling me about these disappearances in Griffith Park that he was researching and that were unexplained. There were unsolved disappearances going back to the turn of the century, here in Los Angeles. And a lot of them were children. And there wasn't any explanation for it. So he came up with this idea. He said, 'I have this idea for a horror story based around these actual disappearances.' And so he came up with this concept that there were these remnants of these ancient tribes that were living deep in these caverns . . . and they were the reasons for these disappearances. I liked the idea for it."

Shot under the title of *Sanctuary For Evil*, *Park* begins 12,000 years in the prehistoric past. Gar (an actor escaping Screen Actor Guild penalties by hiding behind the John Waters-like name of "Crackers" Phinn) and Tra (Barbara Monker) are banished from their clan by a tribal elder. Both are cursed to wander the earth for 12,000 years hence, forced into acts of cannibalism to retain their youthful appearance. The only way to escape the curse is to sacrifice a 16-year-old virgin who is a descendant of the tribe, at which point they will be granted immortality . . . although one would figure that after wandering the earth for 12,000 years they both would have pretty much been there and done that by then. Switching to present day Los Angeles, Gar quickly seduces his landlady Linnea Quigley (five years before she hit it big with scream queen status in *Return of the Living Dead*) and fathers a female child he names Bondi (Tamara Taylor). There's more than a touch of an Electra complex swirling around father and daughter which reaches a boiling point by her 16th birthday. Bondi runs away from home, and is picked up by Foldes and screenwriter Lynwood Chase in a van. As they grope her, Bondi calls upon her magical talisman and sends the van hurtling off a cliff, escaping in the nick of time before it bursts into flames.

Bondi hightails it to Griffith Park where she meets fellow runaway Meeno Peluce (TV's *The Bad News Bears*) hiding in a shack. Tra, disguised as a withered old crone in a black cape and eye patch, recognizes Bondi and prepares for the climactic sacrifice.

Foldes is more than just slightly embarrassed by *Park*. Very much like Edward D. Wood Jr.'s *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (1959), the film shows extreme ambition and tries to tackle big themes while showing a distinct lack of technical competency. The photography, editing, lighting, acting and direction can't possibly get any worse. Furthermore, *Park* will never be appreciated on the level of *Plan 9* due to its taboo themes of incest, child abuse, torture and murder, and its extremely graphic gore. The uncut version of *Park* features the most tasteless scenes of intestine scarfing this side of a Third World cannibal film.

"I don't talk about *Park* very much because . . . I'm in a totally different mind space than that. I can look back on it now, and for a long time, I was really like . . . I really dislike the film. It is what it is. It was the first film that I directed, I did something that was very overreaching, as well as try to make a gory horror movie simultaneously."

Even the most hostile audience member will acknowledge that *Park* tries very hard to be different and attempts to make an important statement. "I got a call from a book publisher (Succubus Press) and they wanted me to write a chapter in this book called *Gods in Polyester*, about Seventies cult filmmakers. And they picked a select group and . . . they were allowing each filmmaker to write about one of their films. They were the ones to select which film, but you could write however much or however little you wanted. And they would publish it entirely unedited. Of course, they wanted me to write about *Don't* Go *Near the Park*. Now of all the movies that I've made, why *Don't* Go *Near the Park*? And they said the film had quite a cult following. I went, 'Really? I really didn't know that.'

"And I started to research this, and I went online and I was just amazed! All of this stuff on *Don't* Go *Near the Park* out there on the internet. There were people writing long dissertations about the movie and its hidden meanings . . . it's actually very funny to me!" laughs a bemused Foldes.

This writer penned an article on the film titled, "Hope I die 'fore I get Old," for the *Deep Red Horror Handbook* back in 1989. More recently, I made my local cult film society screen the film where the 50-plus audience members begged for mercy at the 20-minute mark. Foldes also acknowledges that this writer first alerted him to the many alternate titles the film had on home video (*Curse of the Living Dead*, *Nightstalker*) back in 1996.

"On eBay, I collect the various versions. I like to have the jackets. I have stuff from all over the world." *Park* was also one of several films to win "Video Nasty" status in the United Kingdom.

For *Park*, Foldes made a deal with Cardinal Film Releasing, a New York-based firm that handled many horror titles. "It was run by two guys, Howard Mahler and Irwin Lesser. They were sub-distributors for a lot of the bigger companies, and they released their own films as well. They came up with the title *Don't* Go *Near the Park*." In the same manner, other horror pictures of the time admonished viewers to *Don't Look in the Basement*, *Don't Open the Window* and *Don't Answer the Phone*. (Linnea Quigley, a seasoned survivor who does an audio commentary with Foldes on the DVD of *Park* refers to the film as "Don't Go Near the Movie.") The film had a heavy theatrical release and ran frequently on New York City's 42nd Street. *Park* was also drastically edited, adding to the film's already choppy nature. "It was originally a good 15 to 20 minutes longer," Foldes estimates.

Given the highly divergent reactions sparked by the film over the years—from befuddled audience members who give up on it at the ten-minute mark to those who find it fraught with inner meaning—*Don't* Go *Near the Park* stands as testament to its young, ambitious director.

THE GREAT SKYCOPTER RESCUE (1981)

After the sleaze and tease of *Malibu High* and the Grand Guignol excess of *Don't* Go *Near the Park*, it was time for lighter, more upbeat fare for Foldes and company. *The Great Skycopter Rescue* (1981) is a delightful little B movie, that save for a few brief shots of female nudity, is an action-adventure yarn suitable for the whole family. Set in a small California town overrun by villainous bikers, deejay Jimmy Jet (Terry Michos, *The Warriors*) uncovers a plot to drive out the townspeople by corrupt businessmen (led by William Marshall of *Blacula* fame) in order to plunder the area's untapped oil reserves. Wily inventor Will Powerski, played by Paul Tanashian, musters up his fleet of cropped helicopters, the sky copters of the title, to do battle with the bad guys. Both Tanashian and Michos engage in heavy male bonding, and by the film's end both dance victoriously under flashing disco strobe lights.

"Tanashian really was a sweet kid. He was very talented, very funny. He passed away a number of years ago." The IMDB lists no further credits for him, other than Foldes' *Young Warriors* (1983). He died the same year at the age of 23.

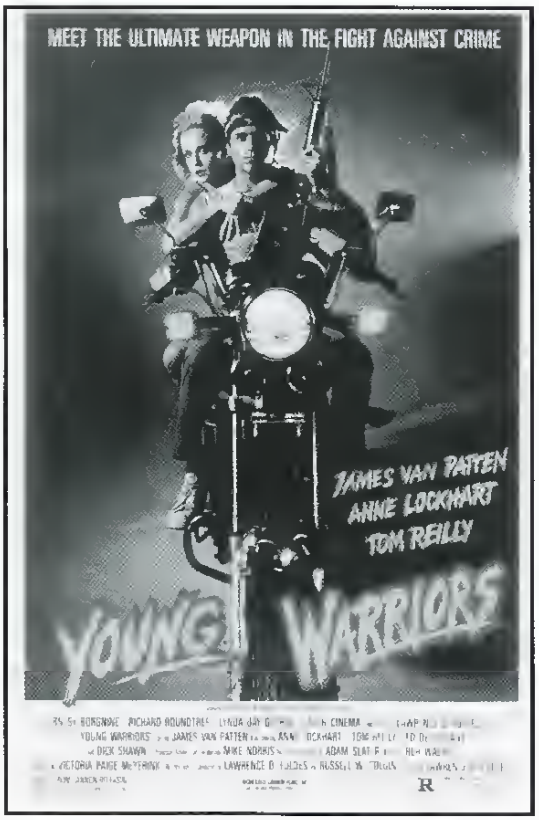
Skycopter was a family affair of sorts as it featured Foldes' bride-to-be, Victoria Paige Meyerink, working as a producer. Meyerink was a well-known child actress who had won America's hearts at the age of four on TV's *The Danny Kaye Show*. She would star in countless TV series such as *Green Acres* and *Family Affair*, and work with Elvis Presley in *Speedway* (1968). Foldes said to Meyerink that she had spent so much time before the camera it was time to put her gifts behind the camera as well, and the couple were wed in 1983. The young couple, still in their early twenties, would garner much column space as typifying Hollywood's emerging breed of filmmaker. Neither Foldes nor Meyerink was prepared for what soon lay in store for them.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

YOUNG WARRIORS (1983)

"What do you get if you cross *Animal House* with *Death Wish*?" That previous statement is not a phrase found in the satirical online newspaper *The Onion*, but comes straight off of *Young Warriors* video box copy. *Young Warriors* remains the favorite of Foldes' earlier features, cramming in lots of production value, action sequences, name actors and challenging themes. While technically polished, *Young Warriors* also tends to overreach itself in the manner of Foldes' much-dismissed *Park*.

James Van Patten stars as Kevin, a petulant film student attending college in Southern California. He hangs out with his frat buddies, whose chief concerns are getting laid, drinking beer and subjecting pledges to sadistic, homoerotic hazing rites. Kevin's hedonism comes to an end when his teenage sister Tiffany (April Dawn) is brutally raped and killed on the night of her prom. Enlisting the aid of his friends to bring the killers to justice, the collegiates begin hanging out in waterfront bars in order to stake out the city's various underworld connections.



Alas, Kevin and company fail to heed Friedrich Nietzsche's admonishment, "Battle not with monsters, lest you become a monster – and if you gaze into the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you." Things go from bad to worse. Innocent people die, and Kevin kills himself and the remaining cast members by dropping a live grenade into an ammo box, sending the frat house up in a fiery conflagration.

An American and Canadian co-production, Vancouver's skyline very unconvincingly stands in for Los Angeles during a funeral scene. Foldes was so impressed with Linnea Quigley's friendly demeanor on the set of *Don't Go Near the Park* that he rehired her over a young unknown by the name of Vanna White, who was willing to do the nudity required for the role. Foldes would later kick himself over the potential residuals lost with that casting decision.

Two aspects of *Young Warriors* would return in a big way to Foldes years after the film was shot. While the film has definite camp appeal, the rape scene at the beginning is as harrowing as the ones shown in *Irreversible* (2002) and *I Spit on Your Grave* (1977). The sequence is so potent and relentless that it originally tagged the film with an X-rating. Foldes enlisted the help of teachers and clergy to write letters to the ratings board arguing that the act of rape is ugly and horrifying, and needed to be depicted as such in the film. Controversy also swirled around the fact that actress April Dawn was underage, although the more revealing parts were accomplished with a body double. The ratings board let the film slide with an "R" rating after a few token cuts.

Adding to the film's production value is a scene of a helicopter crashing into a used car lot, setting off a series of explosions. Foldes and crew accomplished the scene with the aid of a junked helicopter found by Victoria in Oregon. Shot on an exterior set built near Valencia, the sequence only lasts a few seconds, but cost Foldes $50,000 to shoot. Both the rape sequence and the helicopter scene would later come back to haunt Foldes in a court of law.

DOING BATTLE WITH GOLIATH

Every movie fan knows of the wily Israeli production team of Menahem Golan and Yorum Globus, the brains and muscles behind Cannon Films. Golan and Globus kept multiplexes and video store shelves stocked with an endless stream of action adventure films throughout the 1980s. If you've seen any Chuck Norris or Charles Bronson film, you've already sampled their cut-rate and cutthroat movie wares.

The world is full of Golan-Globus horror stories, of broken promises and unpaid bills that is endemic to the world of film production; but, Foldes expresses great pride as being the sole independent producer that took the monolithic corporation to court—and won.

Foldes and Meyerink were approached by Menehem Golan at the American Film Market, who expressed a keen interest in *Young Warriors*. "They were so hot on the movie at the time. 'Oh! Students by day! Vigilantes by night! We vant this movie! We vant this movie!'" Foldes says in a Middle Eastern accent.

Golan wanted to broker a deal, but *Warriors* was already completely financed by that time. "It was one of the few times I wasn't looking for money. I said, 'I'll come to you when the film is finished.' 'No, no, no!' And they really did a hard sell on us.

"They said if you make a deal now, we can be working on the campaign and on the marketing, booking theaters during the period of time you're working, and once the film is finished, it'll get out much sooner, and we'll give you some extra money, to which you can put towards more special effects and more name actors. They really painted this rosy picture for Victoria and I about their involvement, and we made a deal."

The honeymoon was short-lived. "Menahem came into the editing room one time and he said, 'You can't end the movie like this! You can't have them die! How are we going to do *Young Warriors II* and *Young Warriors III*?' I said, 'Menahem, you don't understand the entire concept of this movie! It's about the fact that you can't get away with this kind of thing!'" Foldes maintained full artistic control of the project, but even more trouble was ahead.

Cannon offered Larry and Victoria an editing room at Cannon headquarters in Hollywood. The argument was "'you have money in your budget for post-production and editing rooms. Use it for something else! We have editing rooms and equipment, and we'll let you use our facilities here. We'll just charge it as a distributor expense.' Little did I know that they were going to charge it over and over and over again!" Foldes laughs.

Foldes and company were the only non in-house production, although they were treated as an in-house film by the Cannon employees. "We were getting inter-office memos, and we were privy to everything, such as the copy machine room, and all sorts of documents that were sloppily left all over the place." Many of the documents had *Young Warriors* prominently displayed on them, with all sorts of monetary discrepancies. Foldes began to keep a file that grew to a bulging stack.

Larry and Victoria's confidence in Cannon was further shaken by their first trip to the Cannes Film festival, where they met foreign buyers who asked them "Can we deal directly with you in the future?" Foldes learned of even more monetary discrepancies from foreign sources. A movie that had begun with a rape turned into an even larger rape.

Furthermore, bills at Cannon's facilities, such as a $70 Xerox bill, would have a zero added to it. The beginning of the end was when he got a call from Cannon's head of production regarding their film *Exterminator II* (1984). The film had run out of money and had gone way over budget, and they wanted to use footage of the helicopter crash from *Young Warriors*. Foldes had shot many contrasting shots of the crash, and was willing to sell the outtakes and extra footage for a measly $5,000.

"Menahem called me up and said, 'What is with you! You should be a mensch! You should give it to us for free!'" To do so would have looked very bad to the film's many private investors, and Foldes declined. "Menahem said 'to hell with you!' And I said good luck."

Going to the Cannes Film Festival for the second time, Larry and Victoria encountered *Exterminator II's* director Mark Buntzman. "Victoria asks him what he did for the helicopter crash, and he turned beet red. He said, 'You don't know? We have your footage in the movie. Menachem said he bought it from you!'"

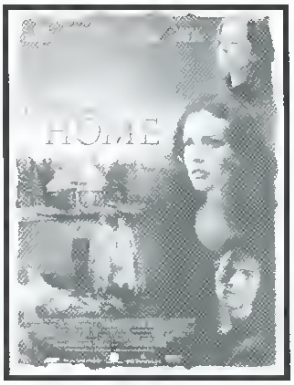
Sure enough, a screening of the film proved that Menachem had appropriated the sequence in its entirety, and digitally flopped it so the action went from right to left. Foldes immediately filed a copyright infringement lawsuit.

In court, "we wheeled in two big TV monitors into the courtroom. It was going to show the shot frame-by-frame. There was no way around saying that it was not the same shot."

The judge watched the clips on both monitors, and he ushered Foldes, his attorney and Cannon's attorney into his chambers. "He looked at Cannon's attorney, and he said, 'I'm going to be very, very unhappy with you if you make me try this case! Now, I want you guys to go outside and settle this!' And we went outside and settled it. And we wound up getting slightly more than what we asked for. In fact, it was several times more," Foldes beams.

Seeing as both *Skycopter* and *Don't Go Near the Park* were now being handled by Cannon, litigation on breach of contract and accounting issues dragged on for six more years. During a six-week jury trial, Cannon's attorneys tried to paint Lawrence and Victoria as pornographic filmmakers by dragging out the original X-rating for *Warriors*. Menahem Golan took the witness stand and declared that Cannon would never be associated with an X-rated film. Foldes' team whipped out a huge double-spread advertisement that declared Cannon's proud association with Bo Derek's X-rated *Bolero* (1980). While Golan tried to bluster his way out of that point, he was made to shamefacedly read titles from Cannon's catalogue, that included such soft-core late night cable fare as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The Happy Hooker Goes to Hollywood*, *Going Steady*, *Lemon Popsicle*, *The Last American Virgin* and *Going All the Way*. The judge turned to Foldes' attorney and said, "I think we get the point."

The court battle and victory was bittersweet, as it greatly tied up Foldes and his production company. The Cannon Corporation would eventually splinter, come under SEC investigation, and go bankrupt. Menahem Golan would return to his native Israel, and produce straight-to-video projects there.



NIGHT FORCE and PRIMA DONNAS

Few found much to recommend about Foldes' next film, *Night Force* (1987). The late 1980s saw many action-adventure features clogging up video store shelves, often featuring Sybil Danning and only 1.5 action scenes. *Night Force* is one of them, only this time starring Linda Blair. "*Night Force* was my favorite script and ultimately wound up being my least favorite film."

Foldes originally wanted to raise the production costs privately, but was approached by Vestron Video, that was riding on a crest created by *Dirty Dancing* (1985). "They were very cash rich. They wanted to make the film. We had already made a deal with a British company called VTC. At the last minute they ran into huge financial problems. We had done a lot of pre-production work, and a lot of the stuff was done, and they were unable to finance it. It was the first time we did a negative pickup deal," Foldes explains. Legal fees over the contract gobbled up a lot of the film's budget, and Vestron executives wouldn't budge on more money. Fueling production woes was that Vestron also insisted on a female action star, i.e. Linda Blair. Victoria had a working relationship with Jodie Foster, who was undergoing a career slump at that time, and Foster had originally agreed to take the role. Kris Kristofferson was also slated to play the role played by Richard Lynch. Vestron executives balked, and *Night Force* became the steaming pile of mediocrity it is today.

Foldes says that he and Linda Blair "didn't see eye to eye." Further hindrance was last-minute script revisions, that had the Blair character—originally set to die after being riddled with bullets—mysteriously resurrected at the film's conclusion. Foldes walked out two-thirds of the way through the shoot. He was called back by Vestron to try and salvage it in editing. Jimmy Van Patten, back from *Young Warriors*, rose to the occasion, but much of the detail and character development in the original script wound up on the cutting room floor.

The next film Foldes and company would tackle would be their only intentional comedy, *Prima Donnas: Rebels Without a Clue* (1991, overseas title *Social Suicide*). Forrest J. Ackerman consort (and star of *Mausoleum* and *Deadly Spawn*) Bobbie Bresee plays a shrewish Beverly Hills mother grooming her daughter (Shannon Sturges) for her debutante ball. Bresee actively tries to discourage her daughter's love for a Hispanic boy, and all the respective stuffed shirts are deflated in a final "dignity-destroying party a la Blake Edwards," as reported by the *Hollywood Reporter*. The climactic ball is longer than a third of the film, and Foldes believes that the film works as a knockabout farce. "We built a ballroom and wound up systematically destroying it. That sequence alone took weeks and weeks to do." Foldes and company shot the climactic sequence at the long-shuttered Canyon Hotel in Palm Springs. Foldes also tried to release the film under the imprimatur of *National Lampoon's Debutante Ball*, but the college humor magazine wanted too much money upfront. Copies of *Prima Donnas* can still be found in older video stores.

TIME TO GET SERIOUS

Foldes and his wife Victoria would undergo a personal crisis before launching their most recent film. After finishing *Prima Donnas*, both wanted to do a serious film. "I didn't want to get pegged into the action or low-budget exploitation films. Nowadays, we don't refer to low-budget films as exploitation. They're independent features!

"Both of us were feeling rather creatively unfulfilled with what we were doing. That doesn't mean we were tired of the action movies. There's nothing more thrilling than demonstrating automatic weapons to your actors, blowing up things, helicopters . . . But you can only go so far in your career doing that."

These matters took a back seat after Victoria was diagnosed with a benign brain tumor. Invasive surgery, that would have required removing Victoria's inner ear to get to the tumor, would have left her partially deaf, permanently unbalanced and possibly facially paralyzed. The Foldes' threw themselves into researching other methods. Victoria then became the first patient to undergo experimental radiation (which she and her husband helped create) at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. The protocol proved successful in reducing the tumor's size, and sixty other patients have underwent the treatment since then.

"When you have something like that happen to someone close to you, you really begin to start thinking about your own mortality. And you start thinking about how many more films you can make. And what do you want them to be? I began to think about the type of legacy I wanted to leave behind."

The Foldes' had been working as instructors at the International Film and Television Workshops in Maine since 1991. A persistent film student submitted a story treatment to them that eventually wound up as their latest feature, *Finding Home* (2005). A mixture of soap opera angst, beautiful New England locales and family generational dynamic, *Finding Home* is so far removed from the Foldes' others features that that in it itself comes as a final, rude shock.

Finding Home tells the story of a young professional woman (Lisa Brenner) called to her grandmother's inn on the eve of her funeral. Estranged from grandma (Louise Fletcher) due to a falling out with her strong-willed mother, Brenner must piece together the solution to the mystery surrounding the years of secrets and denials that all families share.

An unfortunate incident in pre-production led to a casting coup. Ann Margaret was originally slated to play the part of the world-weary caretaker who points the heroine in the right direction, but had to bow out due to an injury. The Foldes' wound up with a much finer actress in the role, Genevieve Bujold, who was elated to find a substantial multi-dimensional part for an older actress.

Reviving the house Mel Gibson used in *The Man Without a Face* as the inn, Foldes set out to make a four-hankie women's picture in the manner of Douglas Sirk. Foldes largely succeeds, although he tries a bit too hard to redress the rawness and anger of his earlier films. A scary childhood memory by the heroine turns out to be rather sweet, the family's big secret is really not so big, and all the characters end up happier than they ever dreamed possible. An adorable golden retriever whines—a lot.

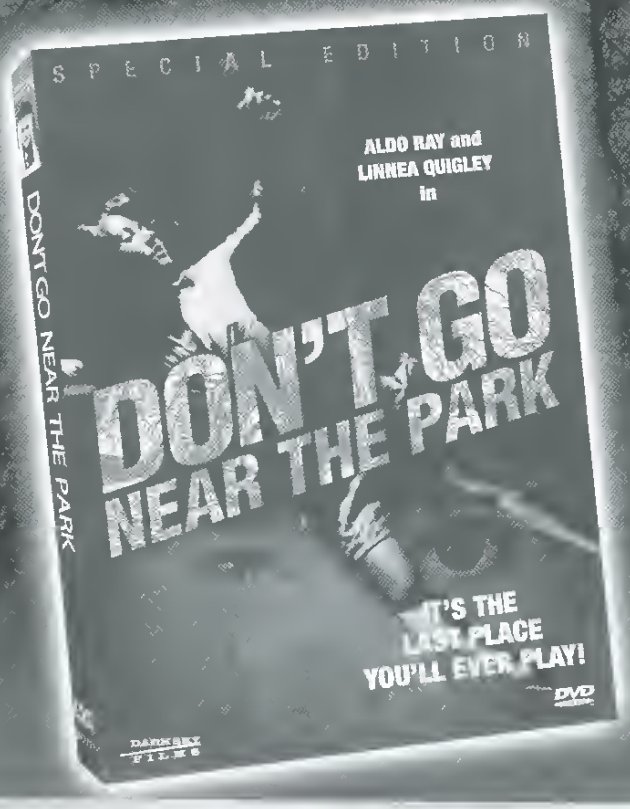
One of Foldes' main philosophical points is that everything in life, even the most obscure and relatively unimportant details, eventually work themselves back to converge in the present. Foldes recently reunited with Linnea Quigley to record a commentary track for Dark Sky's DVD release of *Don't Go Near the Park*. Quigley has since largely retired from show biz to care for her ailing parents in Florida. It is in the commentary track that Quigley confesses to Foldes that the reason she took the roles in *Park* and *Warriors* was largely due because she had a crush on him at the time.

"Well—why didn't you tell me sooner?" Foldes says, exploding in laughter. Indeed . . .

Don't Go Near the Park is now available on DVD from Dark Sky Films.

SPECIAL EDITION

DON'T GO NEAR THE PARK



ONE OF 39 FILMS BANNED BY THE UK COURTS AS DEPRAVED! A TRUE VIDEO NASTY!

In this notorious sickie, two 12,000-year-old members of a superhuman tribe, doomed to roam the planet eternally aged, eternally hungry for lost youth, only regained by sacrificing a teenage virgin! Aldo Ray and scream queen Linnea Quigley head the cast in this grindhouse-era classic. Includes audio commentary, extended and deleted scenes, photo gallery, trailers, and more!

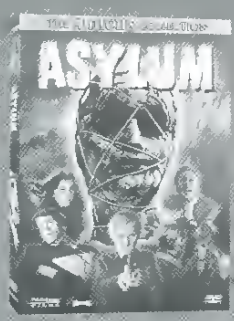
SPECIAL FEATURES

- Audio Commentary with Lawrence D. Foldes & Linnea Quigley
- Extended & Deleted Scenes
- Gruel! (workprint gore outtakes)
- Photo Gallery
- Theatrical Trailers
- TV Spot

THE AMICUS COLLECTION

DARK SKY FILMS PRESENTS THREE CLASSIC BLOOD-CHURNERS FROM THE LEGENDARY BRITISH STUDIO

The Beast Must Die features Peter Cushing, Charles Gray and Michael Gambon and other guests invited to a millionaire's high-security country mansion for an unusual hunt: one of the guests is a werewolf!



Asylum showcases Peter Cushing, Britt Ekland, Herbert Lom, and Patrick Magee in four tales of madness and terror told by inmates in a mental asylum.

And Now The Screaming Starts!, one of the more infamous "killer hand" movies, features Peter Cushing, Herbert Lom and Stephanie Beacham diabolically intertwined in a ghostly tale of rape and revenge.

DARK SKY FILMS

Available at local retailers or online at www.darkskyfilms.com

EQUINOX GETS THE CRITERION TREATMENT

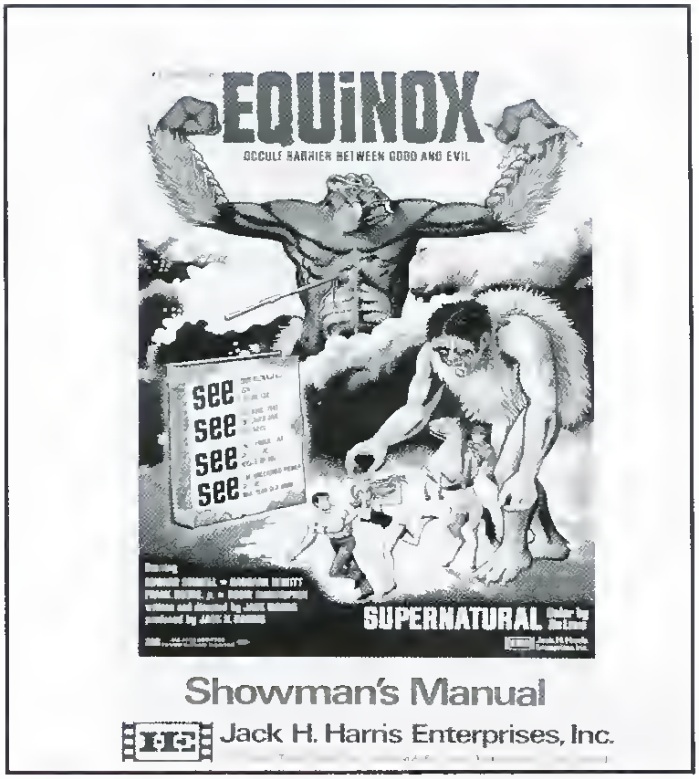
Editor's note: Criterion's 2 disc edition contains *Equinox* (approx. 82 minutes) as well as *The Equinox* (approx. 71 minutes). Other extras include: two audio commentaries, by the filmmakers of each version, including Dennis Muren and Jack Woods; new video interviews with Muren and cast members, deleted scenes, outtakes, animation tests, two short films: *Zorgon: The H Bomb Beast From Hell* and the rare animated fairy tale *The Magic Treasure*, both involving key *Equinox* talents; acclaimed Kong Volkswagen commercial by animator David Allen; stunning gallery of rare stills and promotional material; trailer and radio spots; video introduction by Forrest J. Ackerman, PLUS: a booklet featuring tributes from George Lucas and Ray Harryhausen and a new essay by Brock DeShane.

Sources
EQUINOX (out of print Wizard Video – 1:21:39)
THE BEAST (out of print Wizard Video – 1:21:24)
EQUINOX (AMC television broadcast – 1:22:13)
THE EQUINOX (available from cocktails@houseofhorrors.com – 1:11:25)

A group of young college students travel into the forest, crossing a bridge to get to an isolated cabin owned by an acquaintance. They uncover an ancient book of forbidden rites and, after reading it, are attacked by demonic entities. One by one, they become possessed, just one of them survives, only to be overcome in the end by evil.....

I remember years ago at a film convention, horror fans were puzzled by the newly released Bingo Video *Return of the Evil Dead* (the second in Amando de Ossorio's Spanish *Blind Dead* series, now available on DVD from Blue Underground). Many of them thought this was a sequel to Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*. But De Ossorio's picture was made in 1973.

Another film from the past has more famously been linked to Raimi's movie, although for many fans it remains obscure, particularly since the video has been out of print for over fifteen years. Often cited as an influence on Raimi, *Equinox* is an enchanting intersection between the old fantasy films of effects geniuses like Ray Harryhausen and Willis O'Brien and the dark theme of Devil possession just on the horizon. You might call it *Stop-motion Meets Satan*!



The plot of *Equinox* is simple. Four college students travel to the cabin of one of their professors, located in the woods of Northern California. When they arrive, they discover that the professor has vanished and his cabin has been destroyed. A deranged old man living in a cave gives them a huge book that contains a note, which reveals to them the professor has tampered with forces he shouldn't have, and he has unleashed into the world creatures that were not meant to be here. The at-times-fearless foursome then have to do battle with these creatures.

Equinox is known as a pivotal point in the careers of many talents. In the twilight of his creative years, Fritz Leiber, author of such classics as *Conjure Wife* (which was made into the movies *Weird Woman* and *Burn, Witch, Burn*) and *The Girl With the Hungry Eyes*, plays Professor Waterman. Forrest J. Ackerman (whose *Famous Monsters of Filmland* ran a full-page photo of the superb Devil bat from *Equinox*) reportedly contributed his vocal stylings in a tape recording (more about that later).

Jim Danforth, who found his calling with George Pal and has been an effects wizard for forty years now, was in charge of the mattes for this project. The late Dave Allen (Danforth's partner on a number of efforts such as *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, *The Crater Lake Monster*, *Caveman*, and *The Stuff*, to name just a fraction) ended his career laboring for Full Moon, even directing some of their pictures. But he cut his teeth on *Equinox*, assisting Dennis Muren with the incredible animation.

Future TV stars got their start here. Ed Begley, Jr. (*St. Elsewhere*) was the assistant cameraman, and Frank Bonner (who was Herb Tarlek on *WKRP in Cincinnati* and is here listed as Frank Boers, Jr.) is one of the four protagonists.

The score for the film is by John Caper, Jr., who wrote compositions for other low-budget fare around this time, like *He Lives* (aka *Search for the Evil One*). The film was written and co-directed by Mark Thomas McGee, who did scripts for Fred Olen Ray and Jim Wynorski twenty years after *Equinox*.

The most significant neophyte behind the movie is Muren. In the years since *Equinox*, he has been nominated for thirteen Oscars and has won eight. Currently he is the senior visual effects supervisor at George Lucas's Industrial Light and Magic. But *Equinox* was his first attempt at making cinematic magic.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

There are some myths that have cropped up about *Equinox*. One of them is that Dennis Muren worked on his little movie when he was in high school. This isn't true. Muren was a freshman and a business major (!) at Pasadena City College in California when he made the original version of *Equinox*. (He had yet to matriculate at Cal State.) He got help from Allen and Danforth through a neighbor in the industry. *Equinox* was personally financed by Muren— with help from close friends—on $8,000.

In reference books, *Equinox* is typically listed with a symbiotic date: 1967/1971. This is because Muren's original source material was completed in 1967, and the finished product was sold outright to producer Jack H. Harris, who blew up the 16mm film to 35mm. Harris then hired Jack Woods (who later would co-write the screenplay of *Beware! The Blob*—also 1971—for Harris) to shoot extra scenes with some of the original actors. This rendition—which, although the copyright is 1969, wasn't released until '71—is the one people have been watching for the last three decades.[1]

Although most people recall the grand stop-motion animation as the reason they are enamored of this film, the next most recognizable component is the character of Asmodeus, which in *Equinox* is pronounced AsMOdeus rather than the correct AsmoDEus.[2] And Asmodeus is played by ... Jack Woods. Some regard it as supreme arrogance for the guy who directed the extra scenes to give himself such a major part. In any event, in Muren's version, Woods/Asmodeus is the most conspicuous truancy.

In this article, I will compare all four prints to which I have gotten access. The bulk of this will consist of my contrasting the original work of Muren and the most complete print of the Woods variation. But before I do that, let me take a few seconds to examine the only two versions that, at one time anyway, were given distribution by a mainstream video company.

Wizard Video brought out *Equinox* in 1981 in a side-entry slipcase box, with a reproduction of the film's poster on the cover. Four years later, they repackaged the movie as *The Beast*, sporting the slogan, "It was a peaceful mountain retreat until IT came home." There is a decent illustration on the front cover similar to the poster, including the lizard-like gorilla threatening a woman, and an inset of the blue giant. Wizard placed *The Beast* in the oversized box common at the time.[3]

But the elements Wizard had for the two releases were not the same. The fifteen-second difference in running times between the two is attributable to the fact that *Equinox* contains a forty-second sequence missing from *The Beast*, while *The Beast* has a twenty-five-second sequence not in *Equinox*.

The segment exclusive to *Equinox*—which falls within the first ten minutes—starts with the flashback of the professor's mad automobile ride. Everything from the point at which he gets out of his vehicle because of the roadblock to the beginning of David being straitjacketed is gone from *The Beast*. Because *The Beast* looks more worn than *Equinox*, I believe this omission is due to print damage. This notion is further supported, not long after this scene, by the additional omission from *The Beast* of Sloan's line when he realizes that he has David's cross in his jacket pocket ("Somehow I wound up with it!"). None of this was the act of a censor.

The same can't be said for the segment exclusive to *The Beast*. In fact, if you have seen only Wizard's *Equinox*, you have been deprived of the goofy attempted rape of Susan by Asmodeus. Watching *Equinox*, all you will see is Asmodeus laying her down and then being repelled by the cross on a chain around Susan's waist. Ergo, you have never experienced the godawful schlock pleasure of witnessing Woods's spastic mouth descend upon Susan (and the camera), his drooling on her as he attempts to kiss her, and his groping efforts to feel her up. I can only guess that Wizard's *Equinox* is a TV print of a movie already PG-rated.[4]

In addition to these scenes—and besides the obvious retitle of *The Beast*, which appears in video-generated letters—there are some technical differences. I already described how *Equinox* is in better shape. But *The Beast* has better frame composition (actors' heads are cut off at one point in *Equinox*, and the drawing in the professor's book of the winged Devil cannot be fully seen). The color in *The Beast* is washed out, while *Equinox* is too dim.

As stated earlier, these two videos have long been out of print. If you add to that the incompleteness of both, the versions to seek out (unless you are a collector of obscure video tapes) are the AMC broadcast and the Muren original.

Two lobby cards from *Equinox*, courtesy of Dan Taylor and Bruce Holecheck.

"Tonight's feature started as a low-budget student film about some young people lost in the woods and menaced by dark, supernatural forces."

This quote is from Stan Winston's introduction right before a broadcast of *Equinox* on the cable channel American Movie Classics, which has screened the picture in the past. However, instead of *The Evil Dead*, Winston is alluding to a much more recent sleeper, *The Blair Witch Project*.

I am going to use AMC's print to compare to the original Muren rendition because it appears to be complete, insofar as it contains everything in both of Wizard's prints.[5] This will be no easy task. Years ago, when Mario Bava's *Lisa and the Devil* was available only from the underground (now it can be purchased on DVD), I wrote a comparison of that and the doctored version *The House of Exorcism*. That was a piece of cake vis-à-vis the reconstruction of *Equinox*.

Although I will perform a chronologically parallel contrast, I am not going to detail everything that is different; that would require an entire magazine to do. To offer just two reasons for this, the music is completely different and sundry scenes are shot differently (with many more close-ups in Woods's revision). And do I really have to point out every time Asmodeus doesn't appear in Muren's film since he *never* appears in Muren's film?

I will assume that the reader has access to some variation of the Woods work (so I will refer to sections with terse phrases like "the old man in the cave" and "the bat attacks"), thus, I will describe more extensively the stuff only in Muren's original. I'll still mention something in the later version if it's pertinent to the comparison, or if it's interesting for some other reason.

Opening credits and Running from the Devil
EQUINOX – to 5:00
THE EQUINOX – to 4:52

The Woods version (henceforth referred to as **EQ**), a "Tonylyn Production," gives McGee only story credit and Muren only special effects credit. Of note is the music playing during the credits. The score by Caper, Jr. (who was not involved in the original rendition) is loaded with wind instruments (clarinet, oboe, flute), as well as the plucking of a harp. The coda—which can be heard in late-night staples from the 1970's such as *Blood Mania* (another of Caper's scores) and *Grave of the Vampire*—is evocative of a music box, albeit a demented music box. The title *Equinox* appears on screen etched in flames.

In Muren's original film (henceforth referred to as **TEQ**, which will make sense in a moment), the 'prologue" and credits are reversed. The opening seconds of **TEQ** feature the fiery explosion that sends David Fielding (Edward Connell) reeling. But the shadow that materializes at the end of **EQ** appears right here, warning David, "A curse by all the forces of Hell. You will die a year and a day from this moment." David's run to the bridge (which in **EQ** is a run from the sound of flapping wings) is shorn of the peculiar shot of his leap over the camera in **EQ**.

The viewer never sees the interior of the car – the pedals being pressed and the steering wheel turned on their own – as it barrels down on David in **TEQ**. Pin blame for a continuity error on Muren. In both **EQ** and **TEQ**, the distinct figure of a driver can be seen, yet after the car hits David, there is no one in it anymore. But at least in **TEQ**, you could imagine the driver was supposed to be some phantom who disappeared. In **EQ**, you wonder why you see a driver, but the next shot shows the internal controls being manipulated invisibly.

In **TEQ**, there is more footage of the good Samaritans who rescue David, after which the camera pans to the sky, and there is a dissolve into the credits.

With the exception of the view inside the clock, the credits sequence in **TEQ** is wholly different. Against the simpler score —zinging harp accompanied by low, droning chants—by Truman Fisher (a fellow alumnus of Muren's at Pasadena City College) emerge the words "Berkshire Productions presents" followed by *The Equinox . . . a journey into the supernatural*. The 1967 copyright is attributed to Dennis E. Muren. A few cast members have different names. Robin Christopher (who plays Vicki) is Robin Snider, maybe she got married. But Edward Connell is listed as Skip Shimerl. (I'm going to keep referring to him as Connell.)

The page with a column of the production staff was hard to make out in the print I previewed, but it didn't appear to contain any names from **EQ**. However, there is another future Academy Award winner listed: Conrad Buff, who took home the prize for editing on *Titanic*. Like Muren and Fisher, Buff attended Pasadena City College.

Muren and Allen are listed for the special photographic effects, Danforth is the matte artist. Muren is producer as well as director. Ed Begley, Jr. presumably debuted a little later than everyone else, because he is nowhere to be found here.

At the end of **TEQ**'s credits, instead of the flaming title, we see the clock whose mechanisms have been moving ominously throughout the credits striking midnight.

Sloan tries to get a scoop
EQ – 5:01-6:54
TEQ – 4:53-6:23

In **TEQ**, the clock from the credits dissolves into the wristwatch of the reporter Sloan (Jim Phillips). During his drive to the hospital, there is no voice-over like the one in **EQ** (which reminded me a little of *The Night Stalker*).

All of the shots at the hospital of David being wheeled down a hall and put in a padded cell in **EQ** are gone. This includes the odd shot of David being pushed past Sloan and the doctor (played by Patrick Burke and named only once in either film—as Dr. Johanson, though frequently reported in reviews as Branson—during the upcoming playing of the audio tape in **EQ**), their torsos all that can be seen.

Just outside David's room, in **TEQ** the actual words spoken by the actors concern the doctor, mentioning how lately David had been behaving particularly hysterical and had to be put in this cell and tranquilized. Sloan's postulate that David could be taking is nowhere to be found.

This exemplifies a striking difference between the two versions regarding the interaction of Sloan and the doctor: the conversation in **TEQ** seems to be recorded live, while that in **EQ**—which doesn't sound natural—is dubbed. That's why what is being said outside David's room in **EQ** doesn't match the two actors' lips. What's even more striking is that the voices are completely different. Evidently Harris not only had to get stand-in torsos for Burke and Phillips, he had to get stand-in voices (which are much more baritone in **EQ**)!

Sloan meets David
EQ – 6:55-9:09
TEQ – 6:24-9:06

In **TEQ**'s flashback during Sloan's brief interview of David, the professor's escape from the blocked car is in slow motion, giving it an oneiric quality. And when he eventually stumbles to the ground, we don't get just the POV shot of what does him in . . . we also *see* what does him in: the ape that appears only later in **EQ**.

All the restraining of David (and fitting for a straitjacket) by orderlies who seem to be enjoying themselves is unique to **EQ**.[6] Also unique to **EQ** is surely one of the most irritating facets of the Woods variation: when Sloan winds up with David's protective icon, the defenseless man yells, 'Myyy crooossst!" It would soon become apparent just why this is so irritating.

The tape
EQ – 9:10-10:51
TEQ – 9:07-10:09

In addition to the words not being the same, there is a difference in the tone of the recording the doctor plays for Sloan. While in **EQ**, David seems sedate, in **TEQ**, the much rougher sounding recording features a frantic David, which makes sense since this was made right after the terrible incident he had just endured. When he mentions to the interviewer, "They'll kill me," he is questioned why those "people" would want to do that. David gives a chilling answer: "They're not *people*!" All of **EQ**'s footage of David sitting up in the hospital bed as the taped testimony commences is missing from **TEQ**.

The motive for the adventure into the forest differs, too. In **EQ**, David was *asked* by Professor Waterman to come to his cabin; in **TEQ**, David and his friends were going there because the instructor hadn't been showing up for his classes and they wanted to check on him.

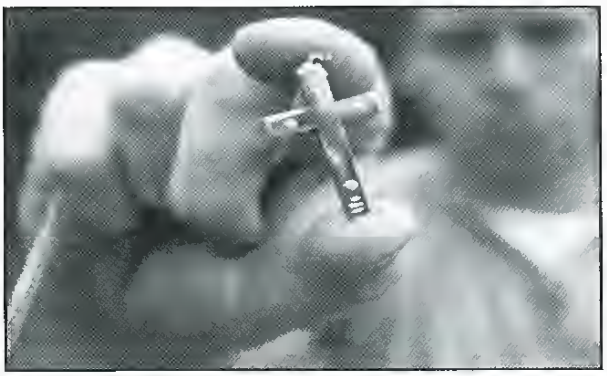
There are two interesting things about the voices on **TEQ**'s tape. The first is that, once again, there is an entirely different voice for one of the actors. Not only were Phillips and Burke post-synced for **EQ**, but so was Connell. And like that for Sloan and the doctor, the new voice used for **EQ** is much deeper. Because Burke and Phillips didn't return for the Woods reshoot, if new dialogue was desired, it's understandable why their voices were dubbed. But not Connell, who did return. Perhaps to Harris, Connell's voice, like Burke's and Phillips's, sounded unacceptably ordinary.[7]

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Meeting Susan
EQ – 11:14-11:59
TEQ – 11:58-16:06

In **EQ**, the entire scene in which Susan (Barbara Hewitt) is dropped off and introduced to everyone takes about forty-five seconds, all under David's continuing voice-over.

In **TEQ**, Jim and David are on the grass outside David's house. Jim's girlfriend Vicki is walking away after smearing lipstick (a coy reference to the fact that she just had a make-out session with Jim). Eddie comes by and drops off Susan (we have no idea in **EQ** who this guy is because of the missing conversation between him and Jim). While a jazz score lightly plays here in **TEQ**, in **EQ** there is eerie music when Susan steps into the frame, an example of heavy-handed foreshadowing.



(At this point, **EQ**'s scenario seems pretty far-fetched: that David and his friends had already planned a picnic and, after being invited to a teacher's cabin via a mysterious phone call, he thinks, "Well, what the heck . . . why not drag my friends along and still have that picnic!" By contrast, in **TEQ** David was already planning on going to a party with some friends, and was just going to drop over to Waterman's since it was on the way.)

David exclaims to his date, "Well, *hello*!" Eddie leaves to make preparations for the party. Jim indicates Susan should get acquainted with them. David clarifies. "But with me, not with Jim." "Oh, no . . . both of you!" she demands. Despite that spicy protest, she and David talk alone, primarily about her moving to the area from New York ("Boy, was it hot there!")

When Vicki and Jim join them, Jim scolds his girlfriend for not remembering something he'd told her. Before the others climb into his car, David takes their picture with the camera Jim has brought, uttering, "You will gaze upon the faces of the dead," a joking reference to the Polaroid that is developing. The disturbed reaction from the others and Jim's gibe, "You can't do anything right, can you?" paint David as kind of a dope, which makes his heroism later that much more astounding. These bits of meanness on Jim's part would be a trend throughout **TEQ**.

For those familiar with only the Woods version, the fact that **TEQ**'s getting-to-know-you scene is over four minutes long (and not terribly tantalizing) might try the patience. For me, it had a ring of nostalgia to it: young adults or even teenagers getting together to have a good time, unaware of what is *out there* waiting to prey upon them. It reminded me of those AIP flicks from the 50's and 60's[9] (which almost always involved a man-in-a-suit monster) or other similar outings of that period (like the tiny-budgeted *Night Fright*).

In **TEQ**, this environment of innocence makes things seem even more incongruous—and thus nightmarishly disorienting—when the screenplay eventually becomes hellish. Rather than the kids fighting the Blob or the Eye Creatures, they have to contend with Lucifer himself and his minions.

Over the bridge and through the woods
EQ – 12:00-14:24
TEQ – 16:07-20:04

In **TEQ**, during the drive down the highway to Waterman's, David asks Susan to actually turn off the radio, not merely change the station as he does in **EQ**. There is no more music until the automobile crosses the bridge . . . and then the Theremin that is a recurring musical cue throughout **TEQ** whirs in, perhaps a trope signifying the crossing over from the safe, known world into a dangerous, unknown one (analogous to the "barrier" encountered later).

Expectedly, missing from **TEQ** are the shots of Asmodeus, sitting upon a steed in his park ranger uniform, observing the kids as they motor along the dirt path and enter his domain. Instead, spliced into **TEQ** is the squid *thingy* demolishing Waterman's cabin, which isn't shown until much later in **EQ**.

Finding the cabin and the castle
EQ – 14:25-17:05
TEQ – 20:05-21:43

The discovery of Waterman's wrecked cabin is another bit that's handled better in **TEQ**. Because of the introduction of Woods ("The name's AsMOdeus!") in **EQ** (and the close-ups to pad the time), it takes forever for Susan and the two guys to notice Vicki has taken a detour; whereas in **TEQ**, it's only a few seconds after they see the cabin.

When the threesome join Vicki, who has sighted the anachronistic castle (an exquisite matte, by the way) in the distance, **TEQ** would have benefited from this diverting exchange:

Jim states, "Tell me I don't see that."
"A castle!" exclaims one of the girls.
"I asked you *not* to tell me that."
It's goofy, but it's preferable to that in **TEQ**.
"What's a castle doing in this area?" asks David.
"What do you mean?" is Susan's absurd reply.

The Cave
EQ – 17:06-23:56
TEQ – 21:44-28:01

The slight distraction away from the investigation of the castle by the noise coming from the cave (Bronson Canyon) is different in that in **EQ**, the noise is maniacal laughter, whereas in **TEQ**, it's a combination of that and somewhat anguished cries, almost like an animal being tortured. And David's hoax theory about the footprint they find is not in **TEQ**.

The words of the loony chap who inhabits the cave are entirely different, as is his voice (though due to the acoustics, I'm not certain about that). In **TEQ**, he remarks, "I guess I gave her quite a scare," referring to Vicki, the first to find him. He continues, "You gonna leave? Ain't you afraid of the demon and his friends?" He and Jim have a discussion over the source of the cackling heard earlier. "That was the demon!" the old man assures the kids. Then he mentions a book he's safeguarding. He retrieves it and gives it to them. David asks, "Don't you want it back?" "No, now get out of here," is the old man's reaction.

The Picnic
EQ – 23:57-27:51
TEQ – 28:02-30:05

The picnic is wholly different. My preview print of **TEQ** is sort of murky, but it looks as though they are tossing generic chicken bones into a pile. There is definitely no KFC product placement this time, as there is in **EQ**. Susan expresses worry over what has gone on, especially because of Waterman's cabin. She wants to leave. The others still want to go to the castle, so she capitulates.

In **TEQ**, the book is not locked, Jim never brandishes a knife to open it, and there is no stench when it is opened. There is never any mention of the Lord's Prayer being written backwards, either. In short, **TEQ**'s picnic highlights are not that high, frankly. (But it is set near a nice stream.)

I also want to point out that during the picnic in **EQ**, the quick scan of the book that displays the Devil bat illustration (barely visible in Wizard's *Equinox*) wouldn't show up till later in **TEQ**, in the Waterman flashback-within-the-flashback. And exclusive to **EQ** is the drawing of the gorilla, which alongside the bat seems more crudely rendered.

Waterman attacks
EQ – 27:52-30:38
TEQ – 30:06-32:53

During the chase scene that occurs when Waterman suddenly appears and snatches the book, in **TEQ** Vicki notices the castle has vanished. And **TEQ** is blessedly relieved of this exchange rivaling Shakespeare after David tackles the professor in the river:

When David proclaims Waterman dead, Jim asks, "Are you sure?"

"Yes, yes, I'm sure . . . I've seen dead bodies before!" asserts David confidently.

Guilty feelings
EQ – 30:39-33:56
TEQ – 32:54-35:00

The debate between Jim and David about how they should feel respecting Waterman's fate is shot completely differently but the crux of it is the same, with a brief converging of the two variations at the stream, when the two find Waterman's body is not where they left it.

Asmodeus and Susan
EQ only – 33:57-38:51

It doesn't need to be said, but the entire attempted rape of Susan by Asmodeus is gone from **TEQ**. But I just want to quote another inane piece of dialogue during this span in **EQ**, regarding the vanishing professor. As they head back to the girls, David comments that Waterman might have been in a catatonic state. Jim confesses, "I wouldn't know a catatonic coma if it bit me."

The book and Waterman's flashback
EQ only – 38 52-45 16

EQ's segue into the perusing of the book and Waterman's flashback are a lot different than **TEQ**'s. There is no need to list what is in this version (and I will get to **TEQ**'s unique stuff later), except that compared with **TEQ**'s technique, David's voice-over here seems like rambling. I did want to point out that, like the simian drawing earlier, the symbols shown in the book do not appear in **TEQ**. This is why there is absolutely no mention in **TEQ** of the willow twig charms that are used against evil all throughout the rest of **EQ**, and consequently the uncanny similarity to the Wiccan influences on *Blair Witch* is absent.

The castle disappears and Exploring the barrier
EQ – 45 17-50 37
TEQ – 35 01-38 16

The reaction to the discovery the castle has disappeared features derision of Vicki in both renditions.

In **EQ**, David declares, "Looks like we have to give some credence to Dr. Waterman's notes, doesn't it?"

Vicki responds with "Huh?"

Susan translates: "He means we have to believe the man now."

In **TEQ**, after David's (admittedly dumb) suggestion about inspecting the spot where the missing castle had been because "it would have left a mark," Vicki proposes to tag along, to "see the castle." "There isn't any castle, stupid," Jim reminds her. (By contrast, in **EQ** Jim calls Vicki a fuss-budget.)

At first glance, the absence in **TEQ** of the old man in the cave yelling out at the simian trying to get in might make you think somehow Harris had gotten hold of some clips on Muren's cutting room floor. But this appearance of the crazy coot was taken from the earlier scene in the cave in **TEQ** and reverse printed, and new imperatives ("Get out, get out!") were dubbed in. The shot of the ape at the cave mouth—over which **EQ** has added a spiraling optical effect—is the same as one that would appear again in both versions during its showdown with Jim and David.

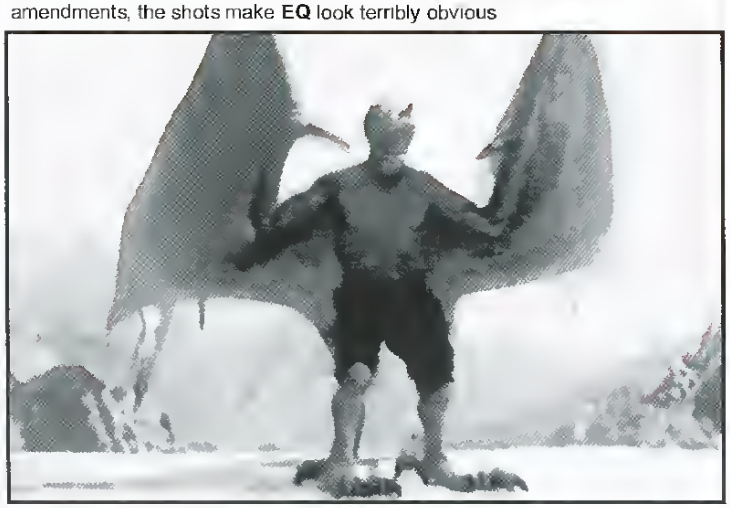
The "instability" theory espoused by David and the delusions of fame dreamed of by Jim when they find the barrier, both in **EQ**, are nowhere to be found in **TEQ**.

Attack of the simian
EQ – 50 38-58 04
TEQ – 38 17-46 11

In **TEQ**, there are more shots of the simian-dinosaur hybrid's onslaught, especially from the cliff above, where the guys hurl rocks at it. The makeshift spear to combat it used by David and whittled down from a skinny tree by the knife-toting Jim is an addition to **EQ**. In **TEQ**, Vicki merely gets a downed branch.

In **TEQ**, when the creature gets skewered, its death scene is longer, and when the foursome walk up to it, there is a more sustained shot of them standing next to it. There is even a shot of just the girls next to it. However, whenever the ape isn't in the frame, Woods reshot the actors and their words.

The sequence involving Vicki's reaction to the beast's hand moving from a muscle spasm is the best opportunity to catch Harris *flagrante delicto* creating the manifest patchwork that is **EQ**. Blatantly showing how much time elapsed between Muren's original and Woods's reshoot, is Robin Christopher's flaxen locks, which are much longer in **TEQ**. Juxtaposed with the Woods amendments, the shots make **EQ** look terribly obvious.



Don't look now, something *bat*astrophic is about to happen . . .

Jim looks for his camera
EQ – 58 05 1 08 23
TEQ – 46 12-51 12

TEQ starts off with the four talking at the spot they had their picnic, strangely matter-of-fact in their deliberations about what to do next. Jim decides to take a photograph of something vanishing into the barrier, to prove its existence. The others start walking toward the barrier while Jim goes to retrieve his camera.

Since Susan doesn't get possessed and assault Vicki in **TEQ**, Jim's search is handled with much less vigor. In addition to the discovery of the abandoned campsite[10], Jim spies a camper tooling along a far-off road in **TEQ**. He shouts in anger, apparently thinking whoever is in the vehicle ruined his film and stole the camera.

The book and Waterman's flashback
TEQ only – 51.13-57.18

When Jim returns, they all gather to study the book that seems to be the source of a lot of their problems. (Once again the setting is different than **EQ**.) David only gets to decipher that the book has "something to do with the forces of darkness" before his buddy grabs the tome out of his hands. As Jim flips through, he sees the sketch of the winged Devil. He finds a note, which he says he can read because "This one isn't written in Swahili."

Jim reads out loud of Waterman "having embarked on a course forbidden to mortal man and heretofore unknowable by him, which I pray in the name of God shall never again be so foolishly repeated." The second half of that sentence is where Waterman's voice starts narrating.[11] If the reporter's voice-over in **EQ** was reminiscent of *The Night Stalker*, this recalls *The Evil Dead*, or the not as popular *The Norliss Tapes* (all of which, of course, came later).

The flashback begins. Waterman's confession has some creepy, Lovecraftian lines . .

"Already I have seen the first signs which foreshadow my doom."

"The forces of darkness are far from dead."

The manuscript is "the last recorded communication between an ancient sorcerer and the spirits of the dead."

Despite warnings, the professor reads the manuscript, and he learns about "a demarcation, a boundary which can appear at any bidding of the fiends which dwell within. Now I have found too late that this borderline . . . this equinox between worlds is no barrier to him who possesses this book of the damned." (The word "equinox" never appears in **EQ**.)

Desiring to learn "the secrets of the equinox," Waterman conducts scientific experiments using the book, getting a glimpse into "the unholy world." Because he learned so much, the denizens of Hell that have come out through the barrier, which the professor accidentally opened, want Waterman's soul, as well as the book. "I cannot elude them much longer."

There are a couple of instances of cool animation in the flashback that are unique to **TEQ**. There is an orange and black clock striking midnight as a cartoonish hooded figure comes forth and points its finger. And the procession of the damned into Hades is being directed by a neat skeleton with a cape and pitchfork.

The flashback concludes with Waterman running down some stairs in his cabin (sans the outsized mollusk wrecking it that was inserted at this location in **EQ**), and the descent is slow, dreamlike, not sped up as in **EQ**.

David thinks the creature they had just fought will come back for the book since it's immortal. Jim suddenly wants to "penetrate that barrier [to] discover the secrets of the underworld" and control the monster. They debate this, and Susan offers the cross around her neck to David, a hunch she has about what will ward off danger (remember, there is no reference from the book about this in **TEQ**). David accepts, and the girls are going to go back to town. Vicki makes a case for just leaving the book and everybody going. Jim realizes he left the book by the tree they had been sitting under.

Attack of the blue giant
EQ – 1 08 24-1 10 08
TEQ – 57.19-59 06

Like the gathering around the dead ape, any frame not featuring the blue giant (created using some outstanding forced perspective) that appears out of the barrier (sans the spiral effect in **TEQ**) and chases Jim back into it, is totally different between the two variations.

This scene defines the difference in Jim's character between the two versions. Throughout **EQ**, Jim has not been the leader, somewhat of a silly sidekick, his value has come from his resourcefulness. In **TEQ**, he is equal to David by having a bossy demeanor and by disparaging others, particularly his girlfriend.

But when the giant attacks, in **EQ** Jim turns into a coward (maybe an option Woods thought logically went along with Jim being more sensitive here), offering up the book to "Mr. Asmodeus." This would help explain his doomed fate in the next scene. In **TEQ**, he goes to Hell because he's kind of a jerk!

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Inside the barrier
EQ – 1:10:09-1:12:18
TEQ – 59:07-59:59

In **TEQ**, when David follows Jim into the barrier, a red filter is employed to simulate the underworld (which is why **EQ** looks so anemic during this sequence). **TEQ** also uses the desolate music from the credits, which is more appropriate in this circumstance than **EQ**'s selection.

When David finds his friend, Jim's voice isn't ominous when he asks where the girls and the book are. As the two leave the boundary, a shot of the real Jim left behind in Hell is the same in both, but in **EQ**, the hand reaching out has been added.

The bat out of Hell
EQ – 1:12:19-1:13:54
TEQ – 1:00:00-1:03:32

One of the things Stan Winston said during his hosting of AMC's broadcast of *Equinox* was that, referring to Jack Harris, "He didn't touch any of Muren's special effects. Maybe he knew what he was doing."

Boy, was Stan Winston ever wrong.

Besides the things already enumerated (the extra shots of the simian, the stuff in Waterman's flashback), this scene in **TEQ** will surely bring a joyful smile to those seeing it for the first time.

When the pair emerge from the barrier, present only in **EQ** is the asinine, hit-you-over-the-head close-up of Jim with his dark eyes as he again asks for the whereabouts of the book. In **TEQ**, Jim says the giant let him go because he didn't have the book. (As they walk, Jim is wearing a cowlick, which I'm sure was unintentional.) David comments that they must get the book to someone, and that he wished he had given Susan's cross back to her. Jim worriedly asks, "What cross?" and as David reaches into his pocket for it, Jim clutches his arm.

David asks, "Who are you?" (In **EQ**, it's "*What* are you?") Jim's answer, spoken like a dandy, is, "Don't you know, David, or are you afraid to draw the obvious conclusion?" To be honest, Jim hardly seems sinister, even when he adds, "We'll have to kill all of you." David engages in a bit of psychoanalysis of the demon inside Jim, speculating he's afraid of people learning his secrets. Jim continues on about how the boundary will soon be gone, and reveals they had resurrected Waterman to get the book (he was a zombie!).

Jim's remark that the border is Waterman's fault ("The result of *his* work!") is the only part of this banter that is in **EQ**, too.

The fistfight that ensues between David and Jim is essentially the same. But there's a considerable difference in what comes after. In **EQ**, when David gets knocked down, Jim changes back into Asmodeus, who walks over to the edge of a cliff, hastily transforms into a giant Chiroptera and immediately leaps off. There is an entire thirty-five seconds missing here.

In **TEQ**, when David looks up from the ground, Jim turns his countenance to him. He is sporting some mean tusks. Jim's head transmogrifies into that of the winged Devil. There is then a full shot of the demon, as well as David's truly terrified reaction. David gets up, and the creature swiftly approaches him, knocking him down again with one of its wings. It then shambles over to the cliff, and we get a much longer view of it standing there, ready to dive. It takes one more look back at David and then soars.

All these years, viewers of **EQ** have never gotten a decent gander at Muren's and Allen's terrific bat. They must have wondered where that photo in Forry's magazine came from. Now they know.

The bat attacks
EQ – 1:13:55-1:17:54
TEQ – 1:03:33-1:07:54

TEQ offers still more juicy morsels to behold in this scene.

There is a full shot of the diabolical bat as it lands (which actually could be where the familiar photo in *FM* came from). When it is repelled by the cross, its reaction is longer in duration. And there are two marvelous extra shots of its flight as it glides *below* the branches of the forest!

Because of all this, **TEQ** can be forgiven for what I can only surmise was an oversight on Muren's part. When David and Susan run through the cemetery, he drops her cross in the grass, and he never recovers it. So how does he end up with it in the sanitarium?

And though it doesn't really need to be said, in **TEQ** there is none of Susan's "David . . . those feelings!" which in **EQ** is her reverting back to her possessed state.

Running from the Devil, Part 2
EQ – 1:17:55-1:19:44
TEQ – 1:07:55-1:08:41

In **TEQ**, when the sky-blocking shadow makes its reappearance, it is David's voice-over on the recorder that reiterates the presage that had been given. David starts to run, but almost instantly, there is an amusing rotary shot that dissolves into the revolving tape reel.

As you watch **EQ**, it dawns on you why the flapping wings David ran from in the opening (replaced in this scene by the shadow for some reason) is nonsensical: the bat was already exterminated. I suppose Satan could have revived, since he does live on in another form, as is soon realized.

The end
EQ – 1:19:45-1:22:13
TEQ – 1:08:42-1:11:25

In **TEQ**, David insists at the conclusion of his testimony that he didn't kill the others.[12] And when Sloan says he can't use any of the tape to write an update on the case for his newspaper (as he also announces in **EQ**), like a vulture he gives the doctor his telephone number and callously implores him to call if "something happens . . . suicide or something. I can use that."

Missing from **TEQ** are those orderlies restraining David again and the patient's repeating cry, "Myyy croooss," as well as a shot of him being tranquilized.

There are two final differences in the closing seconds. **EQ** has an additional shot of "Susan" from below, smiling as David's desperate but fading voice-over—"My cross . . . where is . . . my cross . . ."—is heard. And of course, this being a Jack Harris production, a question mark pops up after "The End."

Many purists have commented on how much they hate the rendition that Harris and Woods came up with, deeming it totally worthless. Harris has butchered perfectly good films in the past. For example, witness his mangling of the Argentinean omnibus *Master of Horror*, from which he extracted the story based on Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" that would later be flanked by new footage in the execrable *Legend of Horror*. But critics reserve special loathing for Woods's histrionic portrayal of Asmodeus.

It could be because I'm familiar with this version, but for me, Woods isn't that annoying. I think he exudes a genuinely nefarious persona. His face—with its waxen skin and caterpillar eyebrows—connotes an otherworldly presence. I also liked some of the little quirks Woods brings to Asmodeus's character, particularly in the scene alone with Jim at the vacated campsite.

When the Devil in park ranger's clothing appears out of nowhere and menacingly advances on him, Jim presents the sylvan talisman around his neck. Groaning, Asmodeus falls against a tree, and in one of **EQ**'s inspired moments, utters, "Damn . . . Heaven!" When Asmodeus proposes one *Hell* of a deal, Jim takes off instead, with Asmodeus hollering after him, "All the money you'd ever want, kid!" punctuated by a bellowing laugh.

Other observations about **EQ** are not entirely fair. Susan's pants may change color three times in **EQ**, but in **TEQ**, they change twice. And yes, the hairstyles aren't always consistent from scene to scene (and Connell and Bonner each adopted an extra chin between shoots). But all in all, Woods did a pretty good job matching things up, recognition for which must go to editor John Joyce as well. (No editor is listed in the credits for **TEQ**, so I assume it was Muren.)

There is one editing choice that, to my mind, is actually superior: the arrangement of several of the monster scenes in **EQ**. The decision to move the shadow, squid and simian to later in the movie is a wise one. Muren reveals his aces too soon. In fact, in the Woods variation, nothing supernatural has happened yet when the kids sit down to look at the book, so it is reasonable they would be calm about it. But in **TEQ**, the group casually looks at the book right after they've fought with the enormous reptilian ape!

Nonetheless, if I were pressed to recommend either version to someone who only wanted to see one, it would be Muren's, without question. Other than the sometimes insensitive remarks by characters in **TEQ**, the many instances of negatives I cited within my comparison show them weighing more heavily on the side of **EQ**.

Too many elements in **EQ** push it too far into camp. In fact, that is usually the complaint made by anyone seeing the film in its more common form. One of the most noticeable is that damn post-syncing. It makes the characters of David, Sloan, and the doctor sound as though they stepped out of a Doris Wishman sleaze epic! And despite what I liked about Woods, that spastic jaw of his (not to mention Hewlett's) is just dreadful.

But the main reason people should see Muren's version is the totality of its special effects. That is the primary appeal of *Equinox* in the first place: the stunning photographic tricks, the wonderful stop-motion animation.

Now, if someone wanted to alter some of the ingredients in the screenplay (the persistence of characters to remain in the vicinity amidst all that goes on exceeds even my liberal allowances for the genre), I wouldn't object. But they shouldn't "touch any of Muren's special effects," nor Allen's or Danforth's.

Equinox is a magnificent homage to Willis O'Brien and Ray Harryhausen, while simultaneously anticipating a motif that was inaugurated in America the following year with Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*. Even its baleful ending was ahead of its time. Without a doubt, the season has come for *Equinox*—and especially Muren's *The Equinox*—to be seen by a wide audience.

FOOTNOTES:

1) It is this somewhat jumbled history of *Equinox* that is likely the genesis of its myths. I've seen in print lead actor Edward Connell listed as the director. Probably the funniest one is that Woods shot the initial movie and Muren is the one who "reworked" it for the 1971 theatrical run.

2) The same entity—the king of demons in Jewish mythology—serves an important role in Gene Rodenberry's 1977 made-for-TV movie *Specter*. It is pronounced correctly there.

3) Horror movies once packaged in this format are now often collector's items; today, for new product, the format is exclusively reserved for X-rated entertainment.

4) Because they used two different prints for the same movie, I hold out hope that the rumor Riccardo Freda's *Fear* is available in its uncut form on Wizard is true. Right now, the only legitimate release I can find of the uncut print—complete with the giant spider dream sequence—is on the HQV label under the retitle *The Wailing*, and it is a terrible transfer.

5) On the whole, it also looks better than those two: it's brighter and framed better than *Equinox*, and it is cleaner and has richer color than *The Beast*.

6) One of the orderlies is supposed to be Jim Danforth, although if he is in both versions, he must be the one with his back turned, who intervenes when Sloan is attacked by David, since there aren't any other orderlies in **TEQ**.

7) One possible solution to this mystery is that Shimer is the actor, and Connell is the person whose voice is used in **EQ**. But I wouldn't wager too much on this hypothesis.

8) I wrote earlier that it didn't appear any of the names of the production staff in **TEQ**'s credits were also in **EQ**. However, one of the names is the same as one of the *characters* in both versions: Susan Turner.

9) Indeed, McGee wrote a book about this subject called *Fast and Furious: The Story of American International Pictures*.

10) When I saw Jim kick the can in the water during my initial viewing of *Equinox* years ago, I thought this was a portent of some kind of warped time continuum, since just prior to this downstream, he had seen a can bobbing along. But it was not to be.

11) Whether or not this is actually Leiber is unsure, since in neither version is the actor ever matched with a speaking opportunity.

12) This is similar to the setup for *The Last Broadcast*, a low-budget film resembling *The Blair Witch Project*, about explorers in a wooded area investigating a local legend and being besieged by something unseen.

"All you get is a lot of TV dinners."

Travelers to a wooded area are attacked by (stop-motion) "demons from the outside" that have passed through a "gateway" opened by forbidden conjurations. A forest ranger plays a prominent role, and at least one actor's hair length changes from scene to scene. Toward the end, the forces of good must battle a giant (whose massive proportions are achieved using a forced perspective effect)...

Sam Raimi has stated he had not seen *Equinox* before he made *The Evil Dead* (just like the directors of *The Blair Witch Project* say they never saw *Cannibal Holocaust*). I won't question this claim. Sometimes innovative minds come to the same conclusion in their approach to a cinematic formula. And sometimes somebody sets out to copy a cinematic formula, but comes up with . . . well, something else.

A few years ago, while working on an article about Christmas horror films, I came across a small picture that also mimics *Equinox* in many ways. By its title, I thought *Winterbeast* might have something to do with the holiday season, it doesn't. Yet it probably is even closer in spirit to the Muren/Woods films than *Evil Dead* or *Blair Witch*. The difference is, no one involved in making it has gone on to a brilliant career in show biz.

On the box for the out-of-print Tempe video, *Winterbeast* is described as *The Evil Dead* meets *Northern Exposure!* It was shot in Newbury, Massachusetts, and features the unmistakable sounds of the New England accent (which I can make fun of since I'm from up there). While laying down trail *mahkuhs* in Indian Legend State P*ahk*, a p*ahk* rang*uh* has gone missing. Forest Service Sergeant Bill Whitman (Tim R. Morgan) and his sidekick Stillman (Mike Magri) investigate. When other people disappear, the intrepid duo begin to question Dave Sheldon (Bob Harlow), who runs the Wild Goose Lodge and seems oblivious to the chaos around him . . . or is he *behind* the chaos around him?

Various dates have been given for the film (1986, 1989, 1991). The '86 date is probably due to that being the copyright of the original music, attributed to Michael Perlstein. The two-piece orchestra (synthesizer and tinny drum machine) should be familiar to anyone renting (sometimes shot-on-video) tapes made by independent filmmakers in the late 80's. What appears to be certain is that, like *Equinox*, this film has gone through some revision.

Acquired by Tempe from an outside source in 1992, there are unmistakable indications some tampering was done to this movie (whose director is listed as Christopher Thies), making it an incomprehensible and outrageous mess. Although he may not have had much to work with, editor Mark Frizzell (who also produced) must sport "Chainsaw" for a nickname, because you'd swear that's what was used to put this thing together.

There is so much bad filmmaking to recommend in this barely 76-minute feature, where do I begin? How about the dubbing that doesn't quite match up with the movement of the actors' mouths? (One guy drinks a beer while talking!) This is probably the handiwork of the video company, since Subtempeco Sound is credited with post-production. (I wonder if some of the original audio was damaged or entirely missing.)

The lighting, film stock, and live, background sound often don't match from one shot to the next. And neither do the heights of actors engaged in conversation, a result of improper camera positioning during reverse angle staging. You want more?

The glass in a door is smashed to get into a house, even though the door is clearly unlocked and is swaying on its hinges (and doesn't even have a doorknob). When a colossal lizard creature bites off a character's head, it is painfully plain that it is the actor's paper cutout. And describing the scandalously pitiful life of a park ranger, Sergeant Whitman spouts the memorable line, "All you get is a lot of TV dinners." You almost expect him to break out in a soliloquy along the lines of, "I once dreamed about pumping gas . . . but I gave up that dream when I entered this dead end career!"

It's hard to judge whether or not Harlow's deranged performance is "bad," but his presence should certainly be cherished. Besides his hair length changing from scene to scene (at least it's not shot to shot like the Woods *Equinox*), his thick New England accent is *wicked* hilarious. And you'll be amazed (after you regain consciousness) by the dance Harlow does amongst rotting corpses while donning a bizarre clown mask and playing the old nursery rhyme, "Oh, Dear! What Can the Matter Be?" ("Johnny's so long at the fair") on his phonograph.

Unlike *Equinox*, this is definitely R-rated. There is a brief sequence featuring a topless female victim of one monster, and there are shots from the pages of a dirty magazine. In a past conversation I had with a director, who is no stranger to filmmaking on a modest budget, he disclosed to me that he had viewed a rendition of *Winterbeast* in which one character actually exposes himself!

The existence of that last, rumored scene would not surprise me. There are moments in this film that make me wonder if some mischievous individual strategically inserted shots. As if *Winterbeast* needs any more reasons to recommend it, an added joy is catching the stuff that is *someone*'s wink to anyone paying attention. Those porn periodicals being thumbed through seem out of place . . . most notably the gag in which pages are stuck together. Another is when the two rangers discuss a sign that has been torn into (a section of it gone), debating if it was a bear that did it. The mutilated sign now reads "NO –CKING"!

The most humorous example of this is when an Indian expert is relating a story about how he owns an artifact—now employed as a charm against the demon Chakura—found in the body of a warrior killed by the Indian demon. He reaches into a box to get the item, which turns out to be a tooth. But during the glimpse into the box's contents, the most noticeable thing in there is not the tooth . . . it is a fat, shiny phallus!

I don't know if anyone involved in *Winterbeast* ever saw *Equinox*, but the one thing that reminds you the most of that film is the stop-motion animation. In fact, there are about half-a-dozen of these creatures, including what looks like a tree monster, an oversized chicken, and a multi-limbed thing that salivates (a sly reference to Mr. Asmodeus perhaps?) just before it gulps down an unsuspecting mountain climber. There's also a battle in a field between the ranger and the giant Indian demon Chakura, shot in forced perspective like the clash with the blue behemoth in *Equinox*.

Unfortunately, the closest credit for any of the special effects is that for the (quite gory) make-up, ascribed to Steve Fiorilla, a talented illustrator and sculptor who has done magazine covers and other film work. Regardless of who is responsible for the animation effects, it is clear a lot of effort went into making this film, even if it veers pendulum-like between these assets and the severe deficits in other departments.

I endorse *Winterbeast* highly to anyone lucky enough to get hold of a copy.

Lorne Marshall

SOME OF THE SICKEST PEOPLE ALIVE READ SCREEM!

Director John Waters knows quite a bit about some of the filthiest people alive. Who better to give the SCREEM seal of approval than the king of sleaze? Get your back issues before they fall into the hands of respectable folks!

SCREEM #11 DUAL COVER EDITIONS!

#11- Interview with director Larry Cohen, *Cannibal Holocaust*, The Films of Val Lewton, Klaus Nomi, *The Flesh Eaters*, DVD reviews, more! $8.00
ALSO AVAILABLE
Limited edition of 500 (alternate Peter Cushing cover)
$12.00

#10- H.R. Giger in NYC, Bollywood Horror, Mad Monkey Movies, DVD Goes To Hell, *Jacob's Ladder*, *The Golem*, Edison's *Frankenstein*, *Vampire Circus*, lots more!
$8.00

#9- *Exorcist* cover. *Plague of The Zombies*, *Don't Look In The Basement*, *The Bride of Frank*, *Toxic Avenger*, *Eraserhead*, Penn & Teller interview, Mentors.
$8.00

#8- *Last House on Dead End Street*, *Uncle Sam*, Billy Jack attack!, Andy Milligan, Forry Ackerman's fave films, *The Beast of Yucca Flats*.
FEW LEFT!
$15.00

#7- Rondo Hatton cover story , Buddy Giovinazzo interview, Brother Theodore interview, Driver's Education films, Celluloid werewolves, more!
$10.00

#6- An acid trip to *The Angry Red Planet*, Dennis Hopper interview, *Dracula Has Risen From The Grave*, Coffin Joe protege Ivan Cardoso, TV monster movies.
$6.00

#5- Mario Bava's *Black Sabbath*, Vampira interview, *Lemora* revisited, Lydia Lunch, Meet the self-proclaimed Ed Wood of the 90's!
$30.00 SCARCE!

#4- Sam Sherman on *Beast of Blood*, Dario Argento and Brian Yuzna interviews, A loving tribute to *Bloodsucking Freaks*, The Montreal Fantasia Film Festival. $25.00

#3- Rare issue 3 back in stock!! Limited quantities left! Jodorowsky retrospective, Johnny Legend's *Outer Limits* experience, Charles Manson tribute album, more! $35.00

#2- *The Man Who Laughs*, Zacherley's *Z-TV*, Jorg Buttgereit, *Tetsuo*, Plenty of movie and book reviews! $7.00 ***Limited offer—buy any 2 back issues, and #2 is FREE!***

#1- John Russo article on *The Booby Hatch*, Horror host Uncle Ted, Blaxploitation films, The Gill-Man trilogy, Ex-Misfit Bobby Steele & The Undead, more!
SOLD OUT

ALL ISSUES ARE SHIPPED IN A STURDY MANILLA ENVELOPE. PLEASE ALLOW 1-2 WEEKS FOR DELIVERY. Add $1.50 postage for one issue, $3.50 postage for 2 or more issues. Foreign orders add $1.00 extra postage for each issue. Send a check or money order to: Screem Magazine, 41 Mayer St., Wilkes Barre, PA 18702.

We also accept PayPal orders!

Make your PayPal payment to Screemag@aol.com

LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS WITH MICHEL LEVESQUE

Interview by Greg Goodsell

The biggest feather in Michel Levesque's crown would appear to be directing the high-energy drive-in favorites *Werewolves on Wheels* (1971) and *Sweet Sugar* (1973). What's not generally known is that Levesque was a journeyman art director on countless low-budget cult movies throughout the halcyon days of Seventies cinema. From Roger Corman to the Dyanne Thorne *Ilsa* films to Russ Meyer, Levesque has lent his talents from bonafide classics to left-field obscurities.

Levesque has long since retired from the film business. While he founded the low-budget production company DV Theatre (www.dvtheatre.com), Levesque currently concentrates on his music career. Our interview was quite enjoyable, and he was quick to point out that his first name is pronounced "Michelle," and that his last name is pronounced "Levek."

MICHEL LEVESQUE: My parents were Canadian. I was born in New Jersey. I came out to California in 1961 to go to college. I was building sets and stuff for Community Theater when I got out of school. My first job was for Leon Ericksen, who's a well-known production designer, art director. He was doing a film called *The Trip* (1967), and I kind of stumbled in and went to work for him. That was for Roger Corman. I think Jack Nicholson wrote it.

SCREEM: Were you on the ground floor of American International Pictures (AIP)?

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Not really, they were well established by the time I came along. They had done the beach movies and all that stuff.

SCREEM: According to IMDB.com, I see your first film credit was for *Bloody Mama* (1970), as a visual consultant.

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Well, IMDB gets things wrong sometimes. Actually, my first art direction job was for *Naked Angels* (1969). I don't even know if I was credited on that, to tell you the truth! *Naked Angels* was a film that Roger produced, and he hired a couple of guys out of UCLA: Bruce Clark, Marc Siegler and David Dawdy. Bruce Clark went on to direct several other films. Anyway, Roger had offered the job to Leon Ericksen's girlfriend, Sharon Compton. She actually turned the job down and recommended me. So I art directed *Naked Angels*. I believe it was one of the first films Roger produced under his New World Pictures banner.

SCREEM: What precisely are the duties of the art director?

Michel Levesque working in his element.

MICHEL LEVESQUE: This really strange stuff! When I first started, the art director basically did everything. What happens is . . . you are primarily responsible for the sets. But you also contribute to the locations . . . I used to scout all the locations and talk to people about the wardrobe, set decoration, the cars that were used, and all that stuff. But "production designer" was a credit that was rarely given to an art director. And in fact today I believe you do not get a production designer credit upfront. Production designer credit is only awarded by the Art Directors Board of Executive Directors after the fact. I don't know if (it's) still the same, but that's how it worked back in my day.

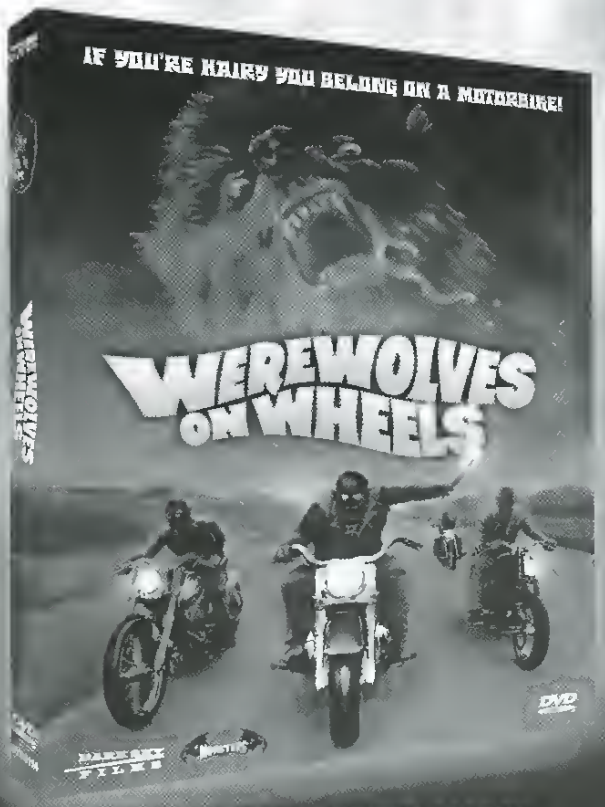
SCREEM: Is it a catch-all term?

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Well, I don't know. The idea is that the production designer contributes to more than just the sets, including costumes, and overall look of the picture. I think William Cameron Menzies was the first person to get production designer credit. And he used to really design everything.

SCREEM: You're listed as a visual consultant for *Bloody Mama* . . .

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

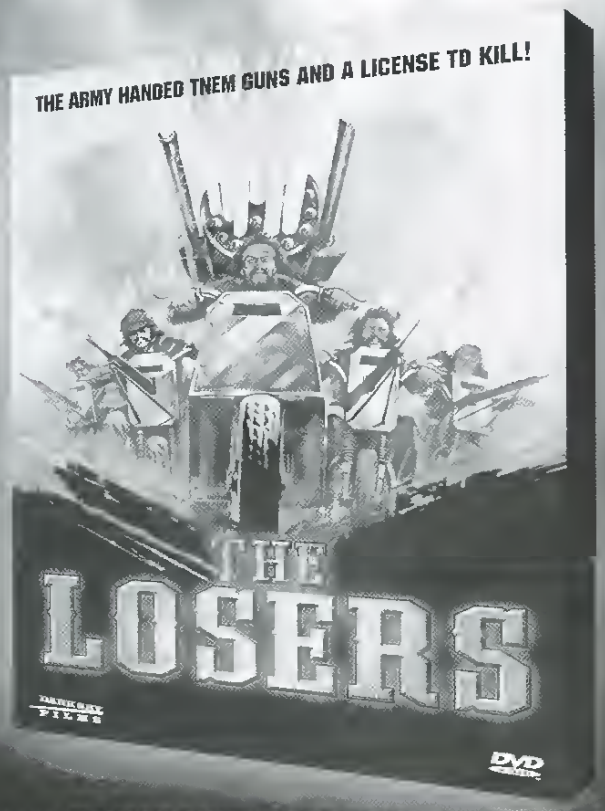
TWO HOGS AND A DOG!



STARRING STEPHEN OLIVER AND SEVERN DARDEN

An outlaw gang of Harley-riding hellions troll the dusty highways in search of sex, drugs and violence but meet a satanic cult along the way and become werewolves!

- Audio Commentary
- Photo Gallery
- Trailers and Radio Spots



STARRING WILLIAM SMITH ADAM ROARKE AND PAUL KOSLO

The CIA enlists a hell-raising biker gang to rescue an agent being held hostage in the war-torn jungles of Cambodia.

- Audio Commentary
- Photo Gallery
- Trailers and Radio Spots

EURO-THRILLER

Dog eat dog!

Starring
Jayne Mansfield

PARKSIDE FILMS Available at local retailers or online at www.[illegible].com

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Well, I'll tell you how that happened. Roger hired me as production designer. That included me scouting all the locations. I actually laid out shots for the locations. I wrote a whole scenario on how the wardrobe should progress from the 1800s into the Thirties, selected all the picture cars so they were the correct year, did all of that, and at the end, because I was non-union, either Roger or AIP refused to pay the fine to make me the production designer, and that's why I got "visual consultant." It's all about money, you know? Visual consultant ends up being a credit they give to all "non-union" art directors or production designers. I was paid, I think the princely sum of $300 a week. You're talking about 100-hour weeks. The reality is I was a starving artist, and I was making money as an artist. That's the reality. There weren't a lot of artists making that much money!

SCREEM: Paying your dues...

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Yeah, I was glad to get the job, are you kidding me? (Laughs)

SCREEM: Any stories about the late Shelley Winters?

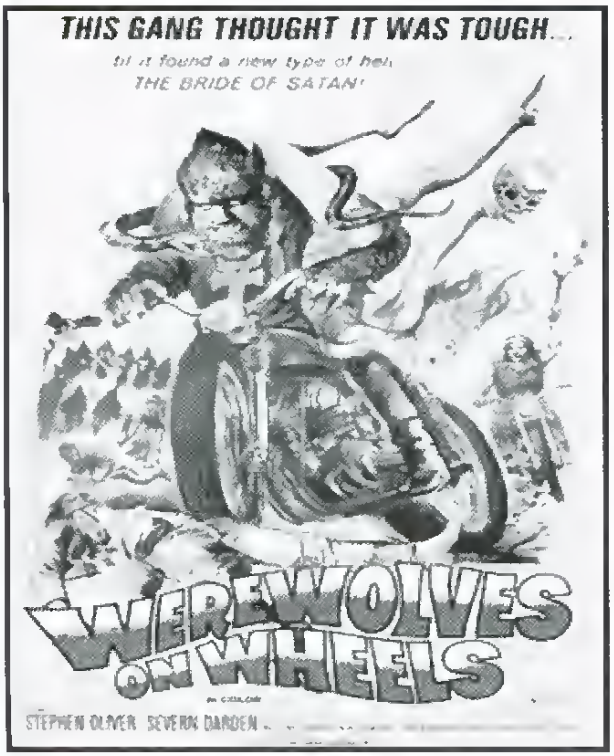
MICHEL LEVESQUE: She was quite amazing, actually. A real pro. She was terrific! I believe that she brought Bobby DeNiro and Robert Walden from New York and it was their first 35 mm film! DeNiro had only been in 16 mm films from... Brian DePalma or something like that...

SCREEM: This segues into your next big film on your resume, DePalma's *The Phantom of the Paradise* (1974). Any fond memories of that shoot?

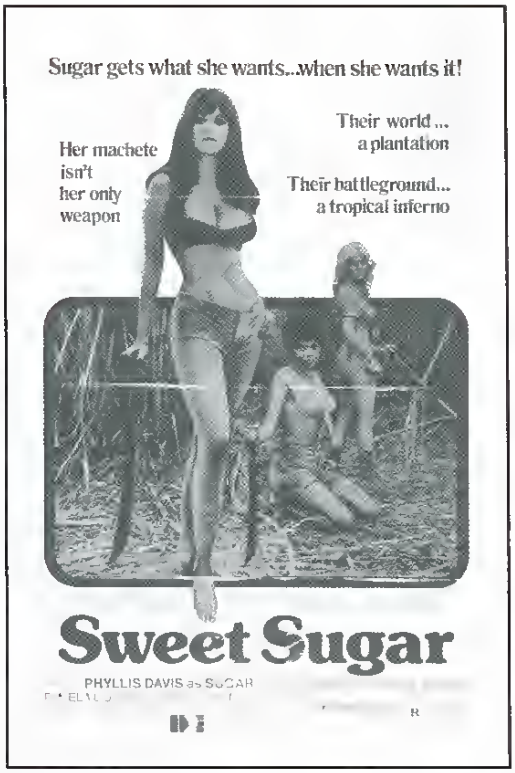
MICHEL LEVESQUE: That was grueling! Actually, Jack Fisk was the production designer on it, and he got a little over his head in terms of the demands of the picture, so the production manager brought me in, to kind of help Jack out. I remember flying down to Texas, and just working nonstop for about six weeks because the company was going to show up... and there were no sets down there! Because Jack couldn't get out of Los Angeles due to the demands they were putting on him (in California)! So I went down to Texas and got the Majestic Theater ready for them, because I had been in theater. I was a theater tech, basically. I came up through the ranks of being a stage hand and a stage manager, and a lighting guy and all that stuff.

So I went down there and got the Majestic Theater ready. Plus we rented another soundstage, and I built three or four sets on that. And by the time the company showed up and worked another week, I was so exhausted, I quit the show and came home!

SCREEM: But this was after your directorial debut *Werewolves on Wheels* and *Sweet Sugar*...



MICHEL LEVESQUE: After that, I was offered some slasher movies, and *Blacula*. I felt it was kind of a racist picture and I didn't want to do it. So I turned it all down, and I ran into this Dutch filmmaker called Rene Daalder (*Massacre at Central High*, 1976) who was working on a script called "Hollywood Tower." And he couldn't get it done. And he asked me if I would help him. So I said OK. So I helped him write "Hollywood Tower." We sent it to the Dutch Cultural Commission. They said they didn't want to do that because it was too far away from home, but if we could come up with a project for Europe, they would think about financing it.



So we wrote a treatment called "Little America" that was based on the fact that we had 300,000 G.I.'s in Germany 45 years after the war. (The soldiers) didn't interact with the culture that much. They created a Little America in (Germany). You didn't go to the market, you went to the PX to shop for Budweiser. In Germany! Kind of wacky. So we sent that in, and they bought it! And they said we're going to give you a travel grant to Europe and do this movie. So we packed up and went to Holland, and did a research trip into Germany, and came back to Holland and wrote the script. This whole process took five to six months. And when we got the script finished, they thought the script was too anti-American and they didn't want to do it. The funny thing was, we sent it to these French people, and they said the script wasn't anti-American enough! (Laughs.)

SCREEM: Ah, the French, they are a funny race! I know Rene Daalder from other people who have worked on various projects with him. He's quite a terror on the set, I understand, demanding countless retakes...

MICHEL LEVESQUE: I was in on the initial part of putting *Massacre at Central High* together as a production manager-type person, and we came to some disagreements just before shooting, so I left that picture! I have a history of leaving pictures. Working in the non-union world, you really have no protection, so you've got to look out for yourself! And when it was not comfortable, I always decided it was better to walk away with my brains and my life, than to throw my life on the line for someone's production. I've made it to retirement, more than most of the guys that I know.

SCREEM: Are you still in contact with Daalder?

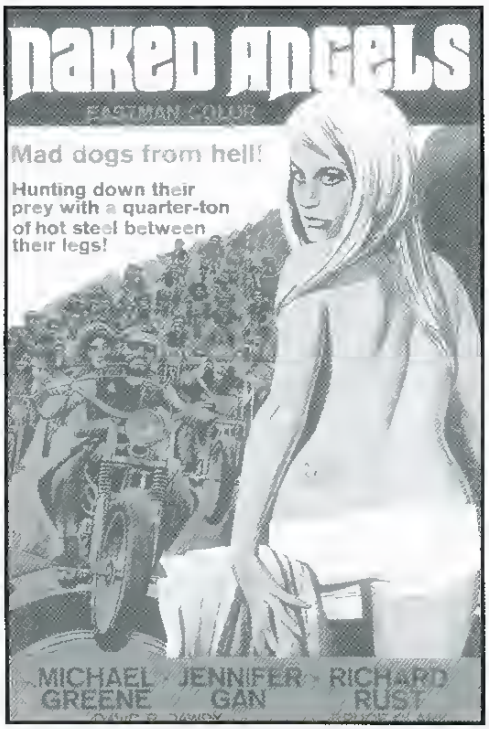
MICHEL LEVESQUE: No, I haven't been in contact with him in years! I have no idea what happened to him. One of the reasons that I left the show was that I was hired as the production manager, and he wanted me to be his assistant director on the set. And he actually told me that he likes to direct by chaos. By creating chaos, he's in control. And I just don't work that way! I'm a very organized guy. I give people shot lists, I like to rehearse my actors, I like my actors to know what they're doing and what they're about. And I don't like to do 27 takes. I think the most takes I ever did was 11 takes, and it was because of a technical problem. He's a brilliant guy! He's probably a genius. But he's got a very peculiar take on how to go about things. Everybody gets it done their own way, and we just disagreed on how to get it done, that's all. I talked to him afterwards, it's not like we hate each other. He had a studio down on Melrose near Vermont. He was trying to do some sets, and I came in and helped the guy who was his art director, and gave him some pointers... but we never worked together again.

Well... when I came back from Europe, it was like I had died! It was like, "oh, I didn't know you were still in the business!" Rene actually introduced me to Russ Meyer, because he was a big fan of Russ. I couldn't get myself arrested! So when Russ offered me the job on *Supervixens* (1975), I went for it.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SCREEM: *Supervixens*, the first of the last three feature films Russ Meyer shot . . . and your first with Meyer.

MICHEL LEVESQUE: I was quote, the "art director" (on that picture) I have to say that I've done a lot of low-budget movies, *Naked Angels* was around $150,000, but Russ was the new definition of low budget! Russ made these movies with his old Army buddies. And his old Army buddies financed a lot of these movies. They would put up $2,000 or something like that. In fact, I remember one guy. The first scene I did for him (Meyer) was a bathroom where a girl gets killed by Chuck Napier, who was playing a cop. He throws the radio in the bathtub and electrocutes her or something like that. Well, obviously, you couldn't do that in a real bathroom, and so he wanted me to build him a bathroom set. So I said, do we have a soundstage? He says, "(Russ Meyer voice) Oh, no no no no! We don't have a soundstage! We're going to build it in Jim Ryan's garage!" (Laughs.) So I said, "OK!" So, anyway, I go to this guy's garage, and I built a bathroom in there and hooked up all the water with hoses, and walls that could break apart so he could get inside and shoot and everything. Anyway, I think it was Jim who told me that he put up a thousand bucks to help finance one of Russ' early films, and he told me, "I've been getting $200 a month for the last seven years!" (Laughs) Russ was like a really honest guy. Here's the guy with the worst reputation in town, and he was one of the most honest, straight-forward guys I ever worked for.



SCREEM: That's a refreshing change of pace from the majority of the independent filmmakers that I know, who promise the moon and won't even pick up your lunch tab!

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Exactly! And they're always going to pay you well on the next one . . . Russ was upfront, and he did what he said he was going to do, and he paid you what he said he was going to pay. He was also one of the most gentlemanly persons I ever met. You know what I'm saying? He was a genuine gentleman. He was really a class act. Matter of fact, I remember I was married at the time and he never called my wife by her first name. It was always (Russ Meyer voice) "Hi, Mrs. Levesque, how are you today?" It was bizarre! But that's the way he was. He was very . . . sort of formal. And old school, you know? He was military, and he had honor and all those kinds of strange qualities that you don't find in the film business.

SCREEM: His last three films were weird and anarchic.

MICHEL LEVESQUE: He was getting real whacked out. He was so much fun to work with, though. He really was. He was a drill master, I'll tell you that. Boy! He worked hard, and he made everybody else work hard, too. He was like the general that led the army. He wasn't in the background.

SCREEM: He was an exemplary boss in the fact that he never made people in his crew do things that he wouldn't do . . .

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Absolutely not. As a matter of fact, another funny story is . . . I think it was on *Up!* We went to a location up in Arcata, up in the redwood forests of Eureka in Northern California. I just showed up, and got picked up at the airport by this guy. We trucked on to this dirt road into the redwoods to this cabin. Well, I walked in the cabin, and Russ had the rather large living area divided up into rooms with black plastic! And those were our rooms! (Laughs.) And he was in one, and I was in one, and Fred Owens was in one, and some other guy was in another. The black plastic walls, you couldn't go to sleep because of Fred Owens' snoring! But anyway, I got up the next morning, and Russ is in the kitchen cooking breakfast for everybody! And he had it all set up like a catetena thing, he had everybody sit down and eat before we went off to shoot. Then when we finished up, it was Fred's duty to do the dishes.

And then the first day of shooting we were out and about, and at 12 o'clock he goes, (Russ Meyer voice) "Okay, okay, we got to take a break now!" And he pops over, and he'd set the grill up, and he's barbecuing hamburgers and hot dogs for the crew, too! He was the cook and the director and the cinematographer, makeup man . . . I kind of made some points with him on the first day of shooting when we were shooting in a barn. I was up in the loft. And he had a backlight shining down. (Russ Meyer voice) "That backlight's too hot! It needs to be flooded out!" So I jumped over and flooded it out. "Who did that?" he said. "I . . . I, did sir, Michel!" "You know how to flood out a light?" "Uh . . . uh, yes sir." "Good, good, good job!" He thought that I was cool because I knew how to flood out a light. He appreciated people who had skills, you know, who could do things. He liked the fact that I was a carpenter and I could build things. And I could use saws and hammers. I got one of his highest compliments when he told me, "You're a good mensch!"

SCREEM: It's always very important to work with someone who trusts and respects your abilities.

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Yeah, yeah and appreciates you. Basically, one of the reasons I got into art direction was because nobody else wanted to do the job. They wanted to play the role of walking around and pointing and waving their hands in the air but nobody wanted to get dirty and pound nails and cut wood and paint. They didn't want to do that part of it. They just wanted to draw a little sketch with colored pencils or something. Actually, the way it worked in low-budget movies was, you designed it, you built it, tore it down, and then you sent them the bill.

SCREEM: What do you remember about the surrealistic sets you did for *Up!* (1976)?

MICHEL LEVESQUE: You know, I really don't remember what sets were in a lot of his movies because a lot of the stuff that (Meyer did) was shot over months. And he may have shot something that was never in the script at the end of the movie because he needed something extra. Once, he had me build a little barn set in his garage, and to this day I don't know what movie it was for.

SCREEM: *Beneath the Valley of the Ultravixens* (1979) appears to be Russ Meyer's valedictorian film. Do you have any memories about that shoot?

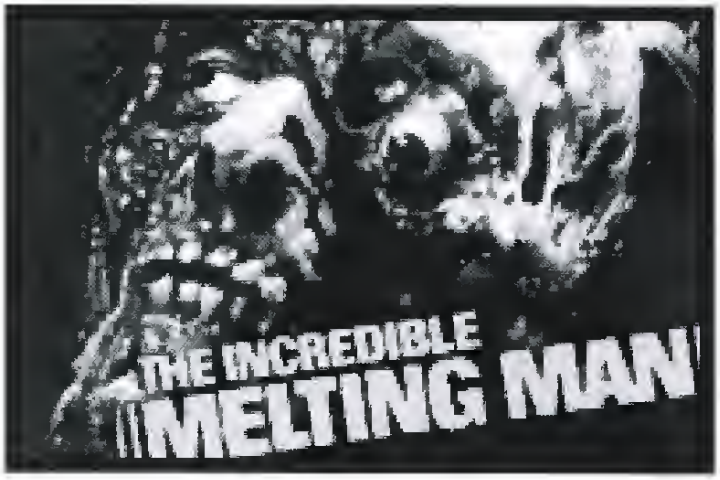
MICHEL LEVESQUE: This time, we were moving on up the ladder, and he had a bigger budget on that, so I didn't build the set in his garage. I built the set inside of his house up in the Hollywood Hills. He had a big, sort of living room-dining room area with a mezzanine around it. I built a plywood floor over the whole area. Then built the set about 18 inches in from the walls of his house, so we could run all the lighting cables and stuff behind the set and light off the top of the set, so he wouldn't have to change lights. He figured if he could light off the top of the set, he could increase his shooting time and not have to mess with lights so much.

One thing I do remember, I was out in the backyard building the flats, and the cops show up! And it's like "what the hell is going on?" The neighbors were concerned that he was going to shoot outside—where I was building the flats out on his patio—that he was going to shoot sex scenes out there! So once we assured the neighbors that I was just building it out there, we're actually going to do it inside, they were placated, and the cops went away and everything was OK.

Meyer's scripts were really fun to read. "The huge melons bursting to get out of her straining bra," and all that kind of stuff! (Much laughter.) And I said we really should go wacky on this! He said, (Russ Meyer voice) "You can have your head, Michel! Just tell me what you think we ought to do, and we'll do it!" and I said OK! So the black girl (June Mack) who lives in the junkyard? I said, why don't we have an Arabian Nights thing going on? He thought it was a great idea. So she walks into the tool shed, and she's in this massive sea of pink netting . . .

SCREEM: Another one of your films that has a cult following is *Foxes* (1980) with Cherie Currie, the lead singer for the Runaways.

MICHEL LEVESQUE: That was Adrian Lyne's first film. There was a British production designer on it, Geoffrey Kirkland. But he couldn't get the art director credit because he wasn't in the union. Mike Riva recommended me, so they hired me to be the "in-name" art director. Basically, they didn't expect me to be doing much. However . . . this guy's wife, before we ever started shooting, was driving down from a party in the Hollywood Hills, and rolled her car, and was very seriously injured. I mean almost killed. Geoff was quite distracted, understandably so. So even though Geoff did the designs, I actually stepped up and did the art direction job on that.



SCREEM: Another one of your credits, *The Incredible Melting Man* (1977) will always be near and dear to my heart as it had its world premiere in my hometown of Bakersfield, California and about 11 people showed!

MICHEL LEVESQUE: I remember that a guy named William Sachs wrote it and directed it, I think he was from New York and he had sold the script to the producer Sam Gelfman. I was brought on by Peter Cornberg, an old college buddy, who was the associate producer on that and also on *Sweet Sugar*. By the end of the film, Sachs and Gelfman were at odds and I guess Sachs got fired, so they asked me to direct the last few days of shooting. I do recall that it was Rick Baker, believe it or not, who did the make-up. And one of the things he did was... he had this "melting stuff?" It was like Karo syrup and baby powder mixed together. And he kept dumping it on top of this poor guy's head! The whole movie. And he goes, "Oh no! Not more goo, not more goo!" And they said, "You gotta do this, you gotta do this!" And the other funny thing is that they would never let the guy run! They wanted him to do this dragging-the-foot, Allah the Mummy shtick. Which was amazing, as how would he ever catch anyone?

SCREEM: That's just an old horror movie trope, where the Mummy or even Michael Myers in the *Halloween* series will suddenly start dragging their feet in order to give the intended victims a head start . . .

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Like I say, it was just another job to pay the rent. It was also one of those jobs I took to pay the rent when I met Paul Lewis, who eventually produced *Werewolves on Wheels*. He also produced *Easy Rider*. The first time I worked with him or for him was on a movie called *Futz* (1969)—

SCREEM: Oh, yes! The notorious hippie film about the farm community where everyone gyrates spastically and the hero has a love affair with a pig!

MICHEL LEVESQUE: It was directed by Tom O'Horgan who did *Hair*, and the whole group was from the Café La Mama from New York. Anyway I was working for Leon Ericksen who again was the production designer, and by that point I was kind of his assistant. A funny story, this troupe from New York shows up, and it's January, and it's gorgeous. I mean it's like 70 degrees and the sun is shining, and they go, "Oh! We're going to build the stage outside on a hill and yadda yadda." Well, they only shot a couple of days, and it started to rain. And it rained for 36 days! So they had all these kids from New York, established in shorts and light little shirts, and it was freezing! So we ended up building all kinds of sets inside. We even built the swamp set inside because they had to kill a girl in a swamp and it was too damn cold! It was just freezing out there.

Anyway, Paul was the production manager. I had also quit that show. Well, they weren't paying us! Paul and I bumped heads a little bit, but we worked things out. So they paid me, and I went back. At the end of the show, Paul asked me if I would stay and clean up the mess. And we left quite a mess there as you can well imagine. And I said, "Yeah, sure." I was glad to get a few more weeks work.

Some of the breaks that I got was because I could get it done. I helped and worked for several other production designers. We did a movie called *Ilsa, Harem Keeper of the Oil Sheiks* (1976) (with) Dyanne Thorne. Jack Degovia was actually the "production designer." I was the art director. One Sunday we loaded the camera crew into the back of my '54 Ford pick-up, and tracked a jeep full of Arab terrorists into the Brand Library which looks like an Arabian palace. By the time the security guards called the cops, we got the shot and disappeared into the surrounding neighborhood. About two to three weeks into the show, they were really getting flaky on me. One night about midnight, I'm up in the art department working my ass off, and this guy comes up to me and starts screaming at me that "no one has the spirit anymore!" I don't know if he was drunk or what. He was screaming at me that no one was putting out any effort, and I went, "Hey, pal, you're talking to the wrong guy! It's midnight and I'm here! Screw yourself!" They had asked me if I would hire a kid who wanted to get into the business as my assistant, and I said sure. His name was Mike Riva. He became the art director in place of me, and went on to do big, big stuff. Bigger than I ever did.

SCREEM: On the commentary track for the DVD of *Harem Keeper*, director Don Edmonds and Dyanne Thorne go out of their way to praise the art director, who was so dedicated that he slept on the set with a beer can for a pillow.

MICHEL LEVESQUE: That must have been Mike Riva!

SCREEM: Does it bother you when people point out that there's hardly any werewolves in *Werewolves on Wheels*?

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Look, we realized that (they weren't) going to give us the money to dress up 15 werewolves, put them on bikes and ravage the countryside and the towns. The whole idea of exploitation films is to deliver as little as possible! Not to give them as much as you can, but as little as you can! But there is a werewolf on a motorcycle!

SCREEM: And then there's the female werewolf, and that justifies the plural werewolves promised in the title.

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Right, exactly. Also, metaphorically speaking, the whole gang is werewolves because they all get cursed by the black monk guys.

SCREEM: This has been quite an interview. Are there any other movies in your flexography that bring back wild and crazy memories?

MICHEL LEVESQUE: Oh, they were all wild and crazy you know. I mean, those days were so bizarre because there were no rules. The studios really didn't understand what the market was. AIP discovered this youth market and catered to the audiences for horror and biker films... That opened it up for all kind of crazy independents. It was kind of like they were making it up as they were going along in a lot of ways. I don't know how to explain it. They used good technicians, competent cinematographers, and lighting people and all that. But most of it was figuring it out as you went along, you know?

KILLER KID MOVIES

ARTICLE BY JOE WAWRZYNIAK

Cinematic psychos come in all shapes and sizes. For example, we've got everybody's favorite pathetic, cross-dressing, mama's boy, Norman Bates. Moreover, additional psycho pic manifestations include: Victor Buono goes bonkers (*The Strangler* and *The Mad Butcher*); Andrew Prine flips out (*Simon, King of the Witches*, *Barn of the Naked Dead* and the immortal *The Centerfold Girls*), Vietnam vets bring the war home with 'em (*Welcome Home, Soldier Boys*, *Open Season*, *When Ya Comin' Back, Red Ryder?*); and, my all-time personal favorite, Millie Perkins, a deranged man-hating loony, projects her rage and hatred for her vile pedophile father onto other guys by killing them via castration in Matt Cimber's supremely unnerving whopper, *The Witch Who Came from the Sea*.

Perhaps the single most sick and startling psycho pic sub-genre is the much-beloved killer kid movie. Killer kid movies are without a doubt an especially dark, deviant, and disturbing variant on the basic psycho theme. But there's a weird logic to them when you think about it. Let's face it people; kids can be pretty horrible. They're at a tender young age when they have a very tenuous grasp on morality and actions begetting consequences, so naturally they're going to do all kinds of awful stuff just for the hell of it. Unless they're caught and reprimanded, they quite simply don't care. Granted, the kids in the following features really go off the deep end with their heinous misdeeds, but I think these movies have a certain warped appeal and are, to say the least, often shocking and undeniably different. So, with all that obligatory intro stuff out of way, let's go on to the movies themselves.

The Bad Seed (1956; Directed by Mervyn LeRoy)

The film which got the whole killer kid movie ball rolling—and man what a hell of an auspicious beginning for this still quite powerful and absorbing 50's flick—garnered three Oscar nominations for stars Patty McCormack, Nancy Kelly, and Eileen Heckart. Adapted from a popular and successful Maxwell Anderson play, it may seem kind of tame by today's standards, but nonetheless remains quite strong stuff considering the conservative era it was made in.

McCormack is sheer icy perfection as Rhoda, a seemingly nice and adorable eight-year-old sprite who hides her true amoral and pernicious nature behind a pleasant veneer. You see, Rhoda's really the descendant of an evil murderess and has apparently inherited her distant relation's psychosis. Among the folks who dear, deadly, darling Rhoda's got it in for, are classmate Claude and Leroy, the bumbling simpleton handyman (marvelously played by Henry Jones). Her understandably frightened, yet loving and protective mother (a superb performance by Kelly) discovers her nasty little secret, but attempts to cover it up with disastrous consequences.

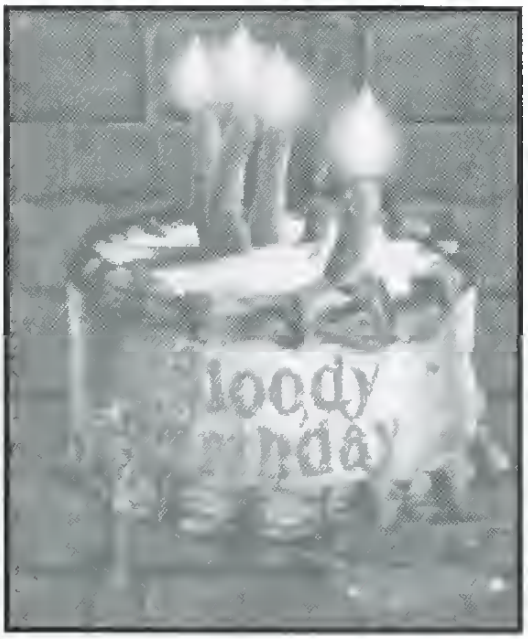
There's no denying that the film belongs to McCormack's outstanding portrayal of Rhoda, a truly iconic and influential fright film figure, who essentially established the whole killer kid principle. Cuddly, chipper and angelic looking, with pigtails to boot, Rhoda could very well be one of the wholesome daughters on *Little House on the Prairie*—and that's precisely why she's so creepy and disturbing. The movie itself overall is quite solid and chilling, with mostly fine acting, sound direction, and an exceptionally intelligent and literate script. However, the pic does suffer from a few flaws: it's occasionally rather slow and talky (thus betraying its stage origins), Heckart is a tad too histrionic as the drunken, grieving mother of a murdered boy, the story gets fairly dull whenever Rhoda is off screen; and, the annoyingly abrupt 'n' unbelievable "I don't think so" ending seriously stinks. Still, these weaknesses aside, it's a most involving and upsetting thriller that's worthy of its classic status. The Warner Brothers DVD offers a handsome and sparkling fullscreen presentation along with a theatrical trailer, a charming interview with Patty McCormack, and an informative commentary by McCormack and writer/actor Charles Busch. (Remade in 1985 as a made-for-TV feature.)

Beware! Children at Play (1989, Directed by Mik Cribben) a k a **Goblins**

The children of a sticksville Pine Barrens, New Jersey hamlet, venture off into the surrounding woods, and become members of a crazed cannibal cult which turns the little buggers into feral, fiendish, flesh-eating freaks. The nasty nippers attack adults and devour their corpses. When the scared, devoutly religious townspeople find out what's happening, they form into a dangerously hysterical and heavily armed mob, who go storming into the forest with the specific intent of killing their own kids.

Boy, is this jaw-droppingly wackoid wonder one really creepy, disturbing, and seriously sick movie! Director Mik Cribben, who also shot and edited the pic and portrays the deranged ringleader of the insane posse (Cribbens' other film credits include second unit work on *Annie* and *The Eyes of Laura Mars*, plus various behind-the-scenes production contributions to such horror films as *Squirm*, *Nightmare*, and *The Deadly Spawn*), effectively creates a spooky and mysterious tone, elicits sound performances from a game no-name cast, keeps the pace chugging along at a slow, yet steady clip, and, most importantly, pours on the graphic carnage by the nauseating bucketful. Lots of tykes get messily offed in copious volume in the truly jolting climax. one tot's head goes boom into a dozen bloody bits by a pump shotgun blast; another child's brains get splattered when a pistol is jammed in his mouth; and, a third moppet winds up impaled on a pitchfork that's rammed through his neck. Furthermore, we even get a pertinent message about the hazzards of hardcore religious dogma and the, equally lethal, lynch mob mentality. The Troma DVD of this beautifully bent, batty, and berserk bloodthirsty barn burner offers a nice fullscreen presentation of the pic along with a brief Cribben interview, a skimpy photo gallery, the gloriously in-your-face demented trailer, and a tasty wealth of Troma-related extras.

Bloody Birthday (1980, not released until '86, Directed by Ed Hunt) a.k.a **Creeps**



This admirably perverse and oddball, early 80's, teen body count flick may never reach the astonishingly bent pinnacle of the deeply unsettling and criminally undervalued, murderous youngsters movie *Devil Times Five*, but it's still an above average killer kid opus nonetheless.

The slim, but serviceable plot centers on three misfit tykes—two bratty boys and one creepily twinkle-eyed, albeit angelic-looking little girl—who are all born during a solar eclipse on June 9, 1970. When the strange, antisocial trio, who stick together in a tightly self-contained and exclusive circle, reach ten years of age, they suddenly go homicidally bonkers and declare open season on the hapless, unsuspecting local yokels, who populate the heretofore sleepy and peaceful Californian suburban burg of Meadowvale. Writer/director Ed Hunt—the usually incompetent unsung hack responsible for such wonderfully wretched clunkers as the delightfully dopey *Starship Invasions*, the uproariously inane Jesus Christ urban vigilante parable *Alien Warrior*, and the stunningly silly *The Brain*—does an uncharacteristically solid and capable job here. The kill scenes are abundant and reasonably brutal (the arrow-through-the-eye gag is especially nasty), there's a sizable smattering of gratuitous sex and nudity; a goodly degree of tension is neatly created and maintained; some nice dollops of dark humor punctuate the absorbingly warped mayhem; and, the surprise grim ending manages to be truly jolting.

Moreover, the top-drawer cast further elevates the proceedings to the perfectly watch-able and absorbing: Jose Ferrer as a small-town doctor (Ferrer was stuck in a serious trash pic career slump when he did this baby, as both the loveably lousy *The Being* and the dismally dull *Jaws* rip-off *Blood Tide* grimly confirm); future *Jake and the Fatman* star Joe Penny as an amateur astrologer, *The Prey*'s Lori Lethin as the plucky babysitter heroine; Susan Strasberg as a bitchy school teacher, *American Ninja*'s Michael Dudikoff as a chowderhead jock, and Cyril O'Reilly (the lonely misanthrope vampire in the hauntingly melancholy *Dance of the Damned*) as a horny dude, who gets bagged while banging some hot chick in back of a parked van. Billy Jacoby (who went on to topline in such late 80's, direct-to-video dross as *Demonwarp* and *Dr. Alien*), Andy Freeman, and, especially, the eerily adorable Elizabeth Hoy are genuinely creepy and convincing as the terrible troika of unnervingly evil and amoral rugrats. And, yes, that's none other than Julie Brown—the brassy comedienne who scored a surprise Top 40 hit with the gut-busting novelty tune "The Homecoming Queen's Gotta Gun"—as the lovely, vacuous, full-breasted bimbo, who does a great lengthy, totally extraneous, yet still sizzling, nude striptease scene to a cheesy roaring rock song!

All in all, *Bloody Birthday* cuts it as a sturdy slasher item. VCI Entertainment's DVD offers a really grainy, but still acceptable, letterboxed transfer, complete with an impressively thorough and informative Ed Hunt bio, three cool bonus trailers, and an excellent interview with fabulously feisty and fiercely opinionated executive producer Max J. Rosenberg (who hilariously describes Hunt as "mad as a hatter").

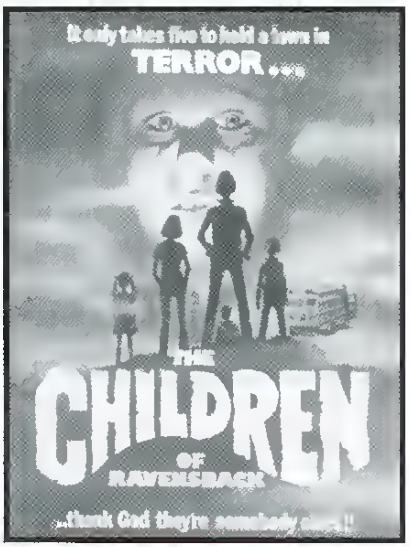
The Child (1977; Directed Robert Voskanian) a.k.a. **Kill and Go Hide!** & **Zombie Child**

Freaky, 11-year-old Rosalie (perfectly played to the eerie hilt by Rosalie Cole) lives with her cranky, widowed pop in the remote woods of the deep South in the 1930's. Strange, snotty and friendless, Rosalie has a most unsettling tendency to hang out in the local, misty cemetery. Also, the creepy killer kid possesses psychic powers that enable her to make objects move and a scarecrow come to murderous life. Worse yet, the evil child's late mother was an institutionalized lunatic, and the deadly little darling can even resurrect the dead (the scene where a snoopy, old lady neighbor has her face gruesomely ripped off by a zombie is especially tense and scary). When Rosalie's sweet governess Alicianne (a personable performance by the very pretty and appealing Laurel Barnett) discovers what's going on, both her and Rosalie's more sensible older brother, Len (a likeable turn by Richard Hanners), find themselves in considerable jeopardy. This culminates in a truly horrific and nerve-wracking climax where they hole up in a ratty old shed, which is attacked by Rosalie's supremely unnerving, rot-faced, dirt-covered and shambling zombie pals.

Capably directed by Robert Voskanian, this effectively spare'n'spooky, low-budget, rural, shocker is a combo of *The Bad Seed*, *Carrie* and *Night of the Living Dead*. It works remarkably well thanks to a strong brooding, rustic Southern atmosphere, some really unusual and imaginative cinematography (the occasional use of off-kilter tilted camera angles is particularly good at creating and sustaining a genuinely disturbing nightmarish mood), a vividly rendered period setting, a superbly wonky, dissonant and discomfiting droning synthesizer score, solid acting from a no-name cast, the wonderfully ugly and upsetting zombie make-up (the hideous undead ghouls look like they lurched off the set of a Lucio Fulci film), and a nice sprinkling of ghastly gore. The last movie to be released by legendary soff-core flick king Harry Novak's Box Office International Pictures, this baby has been issued by Something Weird Video on a typically excellent DVD double-bill with the dismally lame'n'tame stinker *I Eat Your Skin*, along with a bunch of trailers, a terrific gallery of drive-in exploitation pic poster art and newspaper ads accompanied by these amazingly wild radio spots, and the funky film shorts "The Outsider" and "The ABC of Baby Sitting."

The Children (1980, Directed by Max Kalmanowicz) a.k.a **The Children of Ravensback**

One of the all-time great godawful killer kid flicks, *The Children* is the most side-splitting, slapdash anti-classic pic of its kind. Six unbearably adorable, little brats are turned into lethal, shambling zombies with pasty faces, blank stares, and black fingernails after their bus passes through a foul, greenish radiation cloud (caused by a leak at a nearby nuclear power plant). The terrible tykes proceed to literally hug to death their lazy, divorced, weed-puffing, grossly negligent, thoughtless, narcissistic, and decidedly less than model parents. The children's toxic touch roasts human flesh within seconds! Concerned, earnest, but feckless sheriff Gil Rogers (who gives a hilarious histrionic performance) futilely tries to round up the assorted, dissolute, boozy and totally good-for-nothin' local yokels of Ravensback into a posse.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

So Rogers, assisted by token clean-cut dad Martin Shakar (John Travolta's priest brother in *Saturday Night Fever*) and his similarly pure, "preggars" wife Gale Garnett (who had an unforgettable one-hit-wonder in the late 60's with the perky pop classic "We'll Sing in the Sunshine"), has to off the murderous brats before the evil rugrats turn all the townspeople into smoking'n'steaming slabs of overcooked meat!

This singularly screwy howler possesses all the right wrong-stuff to qualify as a so-wretched-it's-weirdly-wondrous, high camp hoot-and-a-half: clueless, fumble-fingered direction by Max Kalmanowicz; a preposterously dumb plot; some welcome gratuitous nudity by Rita Montone (the skeevy streetwalker Joe Spinell savagely strangles in *Maniac*) as a self-absorbed actress; a blanng, droning, grating and monotonous score by future *Friday the 13th* series composer Harry Manfredini; uproariously bungled kiddie attack scenes; pathetic acting; shoddy make-up f/x; surprisingly adept cinematography by Barry Adams (who subsequently shot both *Friday the 13th* and *A Stranger is Watching* for Sean S. Cunningham); an incredibly unscary and absurdly protracted siege situation; clunkily sincere stabs at stinging social commentary (dig those poignant points about the reckless disregard for the proper maintenance of nuclear power plants and the sad disintegration of the modern-day family unit); a riotously lame surprise shock ending (Garnett gives birth to a baby with—gasp!—deadly black fingernails!); and, perhaps the funniest screwed-up flourish of all—an almost painfully risible variation on the moldy old "ya gotta shoot 'em in the head to make 'em dead" zombie potboiler schtick—the only way to successfully snuff the children is to cut off their hands! Troma's DVD gives this tasteless turkey the deluxe treatment it so richly deserves. Along with a merely adequate fullscreen presentation from a very beat-up print, we also have an engaging and illuminating commentary by co-writer/producer Carlton J. Albright (who went on to make the good'n'ghastly doozy *Luther the Geek*), enjoyable and informative interviews with Albright, Albright's wife Patricia, Gil Rogers, and production manager David Platt, trailers for Albright's *Luther the Geek* and *Dreams Come True*, and, a whole lotta other assorted Troma-related tie-in promo stuff.

Children of the Damned (1963, Directed by Anton M. Leader)

This surprisingly solid sequel to the outstanding *Village of the Damned* centers on six highly advanced, mutant kids, with remarkably sophisticated intellects and acute psychic abilities from all over the globe. They all band together in London at an old, rundown and abandoned church, seeking refuge from a scared and uncomprehending adult world that wants to destroy them. A very tense and compelling stand-off ensues, with both the kids and the adults trying to figure out the proper course of action for this highly unusual and potentially dangerous situation.

This film benefits from the same substantial strengths that graced the original: low-key, unflashy direction that wisely downplays special effects in favor of focusing more on the absorbing story and exceptionally well-drawn characters; uniformly fine acting from an excellent cast (the kid actors in particular are all terrific, while Ian Hendry and Alan Badel are superb as the gay couple protagonists, this latter element is handled with refreshing taste and subtlety), a smart and thoughtful script; beautifully crisp black-and-white photography; a pleasingly eerie and ambiguous tone; and, a stimulating subtext about how people automatically feel threatened by and, hence, want to kill anything they can't easily understand. The uncompromisingly bleak and tragic ending is genuinely heart-breaking. Moreover, the political aspects of the story give the movie an extra stinging edge, and the theme of prejudice is effectively addressed with genuinely poignant and provocative results. Overall, one of those rare instances where a follow-up is every bit as comparable in top-notch quality to the first film.

Devil Times Five (1974, Directed by Sean MacGregor) a.k.a. **People Toys** & **The Horrible House on the Hill**

Bound for a mental institution, a bus, containing a quintet of psychologically unbalanced, murderous children, runs off the road, and goes tumbling down a cliff, killing the driver in the process (this opening scene is quite jarring and splendidly staged). The deadly brats survive the accident, and take refuge at a swanky winter resort run by the mean, irascible, browbeating Papa Doc (a deliciously dour Gene Evans, a longtime favorite of Samuel Fuller who appeared in Sam Peckinpah's last two westerns *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* and *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*). Pretty soon the killer kids go on a rampage. They junk the hotel guests' cars, cut the power lines, and—yipes!—begin to violently off Papa Doc's arrogant, decadent, back-stabbing clientele (a lady gets set ablaze after being drenched with gasoline, another hapless lass has piranha dumped in her bathtub).

This thoroughly sick and, therefore, most compelling psycho thriller marked the impressive debut of promising horror movie one-shot wonder Sean MacGregor (*Gentle Savage*), who proved with this creepy, unique, wickedly warped humdinger that he could make one helluva fright film (MacGregor's sole other horror pic credit was writing the story for the eerily off-beat, rural, Devil worship chiller *The Brotherhood of Satan*). The astonishingly brutal scene in which the terrible tykes beat their psychiatrist to death with chains, hammers, knives, and even a pitchfork (ouch!) attests to this claim; this excruciatingly elongated sequence makes artful, unforgettably potent use of both grainy black-and-white still photographs and painfully amplified sound effects. The other murder set pieces aren't nearly as ferocious, but since they're perpetuated by smiling, seemingly harmless and innocent kids, they still pack a serious wallop all the same—and all are punctuated with weirdly startling freeze frames.

John Durren's barbed, deeply judgmental script possesses a conspicuously angry, borderline hostile sense of moral outrage—a deep-seated disgust for the pervasive amorality, hedonism, and narcissism that was a true hallmark of the 70's. This gives the film an added biting resonance. (Durren also acts in the movie as Ralph, a sweet, guileless, retarded handyman, who the other adults mercilessly mock and push around.) The cast deserve appraisal as well, with especially solid work from Sorrell Booke (Boss Hog on *The Dukes of Hazzard*) as a meek, peevish physician and the pretty, winsome Joan McCall (*Act of Vengeance*, *Grizzly*) as the only decent grown-up. 70's teen idol Leif Garrett is surprisingly good as one of the nefarious, little rugrats. Odd, often jolting, and really twisted, *Devil Times Fives* stands out as one of the best entries in the unjustly ignored killer kiddie horror sub-genre.

The Other (1972; Directed by Robert Mulligan)

In a small farm community in 1935 Connecticut, ten-year-old Niles refuses to believe that his twin brother, Holland, is really dead. He starts killing various folks in mysterious and frightening "accidents," using the astral projection which he learned from his wise, loving Russian grandmother Ada (superbly played by Uta Hagen). Ada tries to get the wildly imaginative Niles to see reason, but the little boy persists on believing that his deceased brother is still alive.

The Other is proficiently directed with commendable tact and restraint by Robert Mulligan, and elegantly scored by the late, great Jerry Goldsmith. It is exquisitely photographed by Robert Surtees, and exceptionally acted by the entire cast (Diana Muldaur is particularly fine as Niles' fragile mother, while a then unknown, pre-*Three's Company* John Ritter acquits himself well in an early movie appearance). Further enriched by a meticulously detailed period recreation and a flavorsome evocation of the lovely pastoral setting, this outstanding psychological-supernatural-horror-shocker adaptation of Tom Tryon's best-selling novel (Tryon wrote the script) eschews cheap scare tactics and graphic violence in favor of subtle suggestion and a supremely spooky, albeit understated, rustic atmosphere. This sucks the viewer in and jangles the nerves with its deceptively stark and simple plainness. The performances by, real life twin siblings, Chris and Martin Udvarnovky are truly extraordinary, they both are quite chilling, convincing and compelling as the radically contrasting brothers. (The Udvarnovky brothers currently reside in New Jersey, one's an x-ray technician while the other works as a massage therapist.) This terrific terror treat's current unavailability on DVD constitutes a minor crime against film buffs the world over.

The Pit (1981; Directed by Lew Lehman)
a.k.a. **Teddy**

Here's another particularly weird, warped, and flat-out unsettling, unjustly obscure, low-budget killer kid favorite. This truly strange outing centers on 12-year-old, oddball Jamie, a friendless, sexually precocious, socially maladjusted pre-pubescent teen, whose sole pal is a teddy bear with glowing red eyes that occasionally talks to him. Jamie's heretofore lousy lot in life perks up considerably when two good things go his way: his parents hire a sexy young lady (nicely played by brunette hottie Jeannie Elias) to look after him, and, better still, Jamie discovers a deep hole in the nearby woods with a bunch of big, hairy, carnivorous, humanoid beasts that he dubs "trogalogs" residing in it. Pretty soon Jamie is not only spying on his babysitter in the shower, but also feeding various folks who mercilessly persecute him and/or put a crimp on his lifestyle—his babysitter's football player boyfriend, the mean schoolyard bully and his equally nasty girlfriend, even some cranky old biddy in a wheelchair—to his newfound butt-ugly, fanged and hirsute, flesh-eating monster buddies.

It's those *Damned* kids again!

Director Lew Lehman really plays up the intrinsic perversity of the alarmingly aberrant premise. He has the evil, little brat "hero" cut out nude pictures from a book, and has him force the uptight, yet attractive, local librarian to secretly strip for him in front of an open window! Lehman's aided considerably in his aim to present Jamie as one deliciously deviant and depraved puppy by the strikingly obnoxious performance of homely and charmless child actor Sammy Snyders. With his stringy build, bumpy nose, grating raspy voice, and unsightly salad bowl haircut, Snyders qualifies as one of the most grotesquely off-kilter and unsympathetic murderous little bastards you'll ever see in a fright flick. The film has a really cool surprise ending, too. The Anchor Bay DVD offers this demented dilly on a two-sided flipper disc double billed with the hilariously horrendous, late 80's direct-to-vid *Hellgate*. It's a pleasingly clean and crisp widescreen presentation with a skimpy still and poster gallery as the only extra.

Village of the Damned (1960; Directed by Wolf Rilla)

Quite simply one of the all-time great spooky and atmospheric British sci-fi/horror winners from the 60's, this supremely chilling and engrossing knockout still packs a potent, lingering punch even today. All the young women in the quiet English hamlet of Midwich mysteriously become pregnant after the whole populace goes into a bizarre and abrupt 24-hour trance. The ladies give birth to a bunch of odd, emotionless, toe-headed kids with extraordinary kinetic and telepathic psychic abilities. They have glowing bright eyes, unusual fingernails, and acute advanced intellects, and they kill anyone who is perceived as a threat, in strange and startling "accidents." Some of the frightened townspeople stand up to the freaky tykes to no avail. It's ultimately up to brave and perceptive military scientist George Sanders (in a truly terrific performance) to put a stop to 'em before it's too late.

Village of the Damned is tautly directed with commendable understatement by Wolf Rilla. A smart and compact script is co-written by future Oscar-winner Stirling Silliphant. The film includes gorgeous monochromatic black-and-white cinematography, a nicely spare and shivery score, an eerily ambiguous tone, uniformly aces acting from a tip-top cast (the child thespians are extremely unsettling, while Hammer horror scream queen Barbara Shelley makes for a very pretty and charming damsel in distress), and a genuinely nerve-wracking conclusion. *Village of the Damned* never falters for a second. It crisply relates a scary and unnerving story in a pleasingly concise, 78-minute running time. The film's success derives partly from Rilla's wisely stark and straightforward execution, partly from the sheer vague creepiness of the plot (no explanation is ever given for how or why the children were born in the first place), and primarily from downplaying needless special effects to emphasize, instead, the adults vs. children conflict at the heart of the narrative. (This movie could be read as a weird and imaginative fantastic allegory on the generation gap which became a key hallmark of the 60's.) Followed by the equally pleasing sequel *Children of the Damned* and unnecessarily remade with abysmal results by John Carpenter (who really should have known better) in 1995, this baby's wholly deserving of its classic status. The superb Warner Brothers DVD offers a nice double-bill of both fine features presented in beautiful widescreen, along with the theatrical trailers and a pair of informative commentaries by noted sci-fi/horror expert Steve Haiberman and *Children* screenwriter John Briley, respectively.

And so, we close a chapter on "Killer Kid Movies." The next issue of *Screem* will bring the inevitable sequel. Those lousy killer kids start climbing into the early double digits, hit puberty, and naturally go from bad to worse. Yep, it's KILLER KIDS GROW UP. THE TERRIBLE TEEN YEARS.

MIKE NELSON FINDS LIFE AFTER THE SATELLITE OF LOVE

By Greg Goodsell

As every trash film fanatic knows, the cable TV staple *Mystery Science Theater 3000* is largely responsible for bringing marginal movie appreciation into the mainstream. Trapped on the Satellite of Love, and aided by the two wisecracking robots Tom Servo and Crow, host Mike Nelson would navigate through the realms of cinematic sludge handed down to them by Dr. Clayton Forrester and TV's Frank, with erudite commentary. Without the "MSTies," the popular culture at large would not be "in on the joke" of such films as *Manos, The Hands of Fate* (1964). Nelson stepped into the red jumpsuit with the departure of original host Joel Hodgson, and helped viewers endure some really bad (and not in a good way) movies, such as the work of non-auteur Coleman Francis. All good things must come to an end, and after ten seasons, *Mystery Science Theater 3000* went the way of all TV shows, to reruns and DVDs. What has Nelson been up to? Fans will be pleased to know that in addition to penning the book *Mike Nelson's Movie Cheese*, he's back lending his droll commentary to a new set of DVDs on such MST-untouchable fare as *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (1959) and *Carnival of Souls* (1962), presented in deluxe form with optional colorization and the expected extras. *Screem* magazine caught up with Nelson for a little chat.

SCREEM: I see you have a couple of discs set to be released of *Plan 9 From Outer Space* and *Carnival of Souls*. How are they being marketed?

MIKE NELSON: They're really high-quality releases, and there are colorized versions with the black and white, and there are extras. So they're kind of deluxe versions of these films. And with the colorization, we are reaching more people with these movies. That's what the appeal is.

SCREEM: The color in *Carnival of Souls* is very lurid and the one for *Plan 9* seems to be more subdued, like hand-colored postcards.

MIKE NELSON: Yeah, I think they really put a lot of thought into the overall design, and that shows. They really had a lot of fun with *Reefer Madness*, they were colorizing the smoke in that and everything. It can be done well and it can be done poorly. I think they really did a good job.

SCREEM: Is there a special name for the series?

MIKE NELSON: No, they're all produced by Legend Films, and they can have different distributors depending on who picks them up, so they're not really in a coherent series.

SCREEM: They're not being trumpeted as "Mike Nelson presents?"

MIKE NELSON: No, no, I'm an add-on to them, and happy to be involved. It's something extra on there, which is what I love about DVDs. You can have all these choices. If you like black and white, you can have that; if you like color, you can have that; if you want to listen to my commentary, you can—or you don't have to!

SCREEM: About the commentary . . . some of the commentary is rather edgy. In *Plan 9* whenever Bela Lugosi appears, you say, "You can see the heroin kick in!" Isn't that stepping on a few toes?

MIKE NELSON: Oh, I don't think so. Anybody in a public light like that . . . I've done jokes in a movie that are hopefully taken in a light way, because that's how it's meant. It's not meant to offend anyone. I'm not that kind of comedian, who's going for outrage.

SCREEM: In the extras section of the *Plan 9* disc, you have a skit involving Plan One through Plan Eight, and you have Plan Three, "Do Absolutely Nothing!" And then you cut to President George Bush.

MIKE NELSON: I just saw that for the first time! I wrote text for that, and the people at Legend Films did the animation and whatnot. I just saw that yesterday. That's actually not my idea.

SCREEM: So you wrote the text and the people just had fun with it?

MIKE NELSON: Yeah, exactly. I don't know if it would be my choice or not. I think it's so . . . it's been joked on so much already. I don't know if it would qualify as being "biting" at this point.

SCREEM: It is five years after the fact. So what other films warranted the Mike Nelson treatment?

MIKE NELSON: *House on Haunted Hill* I also did. I also did a commentary for *Little Shop of Horrors* as well. That is in production; I don't know when that will be released.

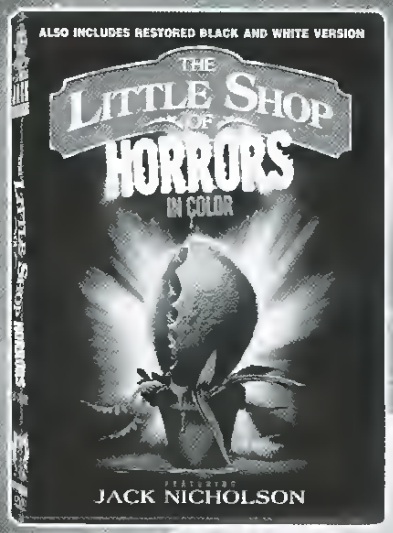
SCREEM: Some people would accuse of bagging on a classic with *Carnival of Souls*. It did warrant a Criterion Collection release, after all! You seem to be touching on classic films and making fun of them. Do you have a problem with that?

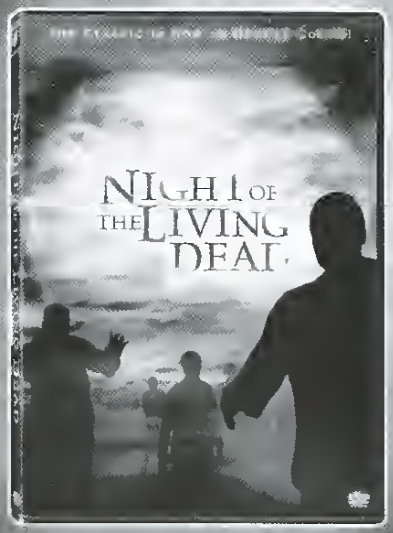
MIKE NELSON: Well, I think going all the way back to when I did *Mystery Science*, almost any movie that you riff on in any way could be considered a classic by some people. I don't know how you can separate that, unless you go to the concept itself. If people have a problem with commenting on anybody's material, I don't think there's anything you can do about it. I don't think supposed works of art can exist in this pristine environment, where no one gets to comment on them, ever. Unless you're against the principle itself, all you can do there is haggle with which movies you think are classic and which deserve to never be touched. If so, it just becomes an argument as to whose movie deserves to have commentary on it.

SCREEM: There is legitimate film criticism, but then you have stuff, like *Fractured Flickers* back in the 1960s, that would re-edit classic silent films and add funny commentary. Lon Chaney Jr. was very displeased with what they did to his father's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1925).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

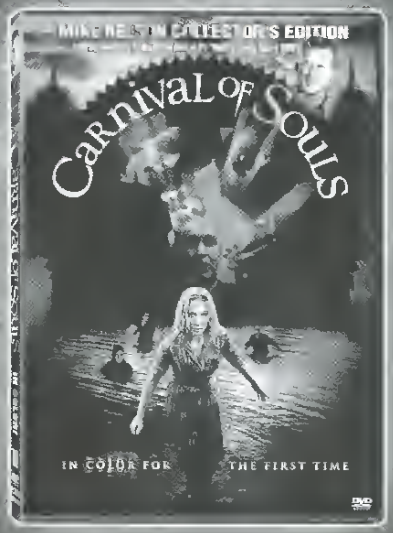
Now Available from Legend Films!

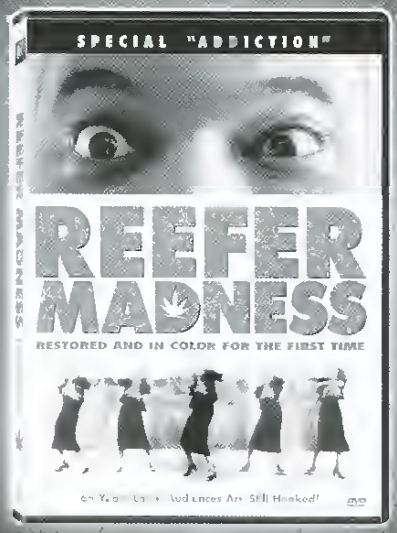




Every Legend Films cult classic DVD has a newly restored black-and-white version and a brand new color version. All of these DVDs include a hilarious audio commentary by Mike Nelson of Mystery Science Theater 3000 and are packed with tons of bonus features.

Visit our website at www.LegendFilms.net to order.





www.LegendFilms.net

LEGEND FILMS

SCREEM: When you were *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, did you ever get angry letters, saying, "You've impugned my immortal work of cinematic art!"

MIKE NELSON: We usually got it on behalf of others. Director Joe Dante was angry with us for having done *Marooned* (1969), with Gregory Peck, the big blockbuster space film. A star-studded affair. He couldn't understand why we would put that among the others films. The show, in my opinion, was never about mocking the movie—sometimes it was, yeah—but it was usually riding on top of, and commenting in the moment, and around it. So it doesn't always mean that the film is the worst film ever because we put a commentary on it. Films that are entertaining are more fun to watch with that treatment than films that are just plain stinky! Nobody wants to see those, even with the commentary!

SCREEM: Do you ever think you'll have to answer to charges that you exposed society at large to the work of Coleman Francis (director of *Beast of Yucca Flats* and *Red Zone Cuba*)?

MIKE NELSON: I don't think I'll ever live that down! I myself objected to that! Frank Conniff, who was on the show, loved those movies, thought they were hilarious, and they just caused me extreme pain! I was just humbled by these things. But some people say that they're their favorites, and some people think we should all die for putting those on the air!

SCREEM: In my humble opinion, Cave *Dwellers* (a re-titling of *Blade Master II*), a no-budget sword-and-sandal epic starring onetime Tarzan Miles O'Keefe, was the worst movie ever screened on that show. Even Joel was horrified at the end of that one!

MIKE NELSON: Oh, yeah. Interestingly enough, Miles O'Keefe happened to see it one time, and he got in touch with us and wanted a copy of it. He thought it was pretty funny. At least somebody liked it!

SCREEM: You also exposed to the world the incomparable *Manos, The Hands of Fate*, which is enjoying pop culture familiarity now.

MIKE NELSON: I thought that one was great, because it existed on such a different level, such an oddity, and so fun in its own way that I knew that a lot of people would enjoy that one. You know, if there were giant fans of that movie, who were upset with our treatment of it, they at least have to be happy that we revived interest in the film.

SCREEM: Why was *Plan 9 From Outer Space* originally off limits for the *Mystery Science Theater 3000* crew?

MIKE NELSON: I think the thinking was—there were a couple of things. When we screened it . . . we didn't talk long about it, because we always had other choices. I think we got a screener, and we watched it. And we had a tough time with the narration at the beginning; it went on fairly long throughout, and it was tough to write comments to. We had a rule that we just didn't want to ever talk over the dialogue, because it would become a rather soupy soundtrack. And I think also because it was just such a classic and people were so fond of it, that we just didn't want to touch it. I decided to do it because it just seems different now. All those objections I had before have since been humbled off.

SCREEM: Why was some of the MSTie crew breaking away as the series began to grow more popular? Was it the hectic production schedule?

MIKE NELSON: No, I think it was because each reason was sort of an individual choice. I know Joel left to pursue other things, and also, I don't think he particularly got on with our producer that well. Frank left because I think he just wanted to do other things. He had a different career path in mind, and he knew the show would go on for awhile, and he didn't want to see it through all the way. He wanted to do other stuff. And I think that was the case with Trace Beaulieu, too. He wanted to do other stuff and move out to L.A. and do something different. It was all just sort of individual choices.

SCREEM: How many seasons did *Mystery Science Theater 3000* have?

MIKE NELSON: We had ten seasons.

SCREEM: What was the very last show like, and did you give the series a proper sendoff?

MIKE NELSON: It was Mario Bava's *Danger: Diabolik* (1968) with John Phillip Law. We knew the show wasn't coming back, so we were able to do a final episode. We got back down to earth, and we're happy to be free of the torture up there. And then our final shot was, of course, (that) we got an apartment together and . . . sat on the couch and watched bad movies. There's a little statement there.

SCREEM: Was there an overriding philosophy to the show? Was *Mystery Science Theater 3000* about people taking what the pop culture had to give them and twisting it to suit their own purposes?

MIKE NELSON: I think so, but I always just thought of it as pure comedy. Let's do the best comedy we can do. And I know that different writers and people working on it had different thoughts about it. Probably everyone had a different take. But mine was just that, just trying to be as funny as we possibly could. If there were any statements, people could read into it whatever they wanted. That was my philosophy!

Legend Films is the pioneer and recognized leader in the restoration and colorization of classic black-and-white movies.

Legend Films owns the digital colorization patents that represent the most advanced process in the world. "Our new patented process produces high-definition and film-resolution images in the original aspect ratio," says Legend Films' President Barry B. Sandrew, Ph.D.
Legend Films gave Plan 9 from Outer Space *the most extensive restoration ever done on the cult classic. "Ed Wood fans will truly enjoy seeing this film in color for the first time, and for the die-hard fans, we've also included an expertly restored black-and-white version," adds David Martin, CEO of Legend Films.*

A Mike Nelson autographed, limited-edition DVD of Plan 9 from Outer Space *is available only on the Legend Films website. The DVD will be available in retail stores in June.*

Legend Films also owns a growing library of classic films, newly restored and in color, including House on Haunted Hill, Carnival of Souls, Night of the Living Dead, *and* Reefer Madness, *and all contain a Mike Nelson audio commentary. Every Legend Films DVD includes both the color and black-and-white versions. More information about Legend Films can be found at www.legendfilms.net.*

FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE SPACE MONSTER LANDS ON DVD

ARTICLE BY DARRYL MAYESKI

On a recent trip to Disney-MGM Studios in Orlando, my wife and I stumbled upon an eatery called the Sci-Fi Dine-In Theater restaurant. The two of us felt like we were transported back in time. We sat in reproduction vintage convertible cars/booths (ala *Pulp Fiction*) and were treated to classic B-movie trailers from the 50's and 60's. Lo and behold, up on the big screen was a trailer for *Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster*! It's been many years since I've watched it. My old beat up copy on VHS never looked very good.

Forty years later, the picture finally gets the commercial recognition it deserves, with a legitimate DVD release from Dark Sky Films. For those of you who haven't seen *FMSM*, the story is fairly simple. A Martian spaceship lands on earth, with plans of capturing our women to repopulate their planet, since Mars was decimated by an atomic attack. The evil masterminds of this plot are Dr. Nadir (Lou Cutell) and Princess Marcuzan (Marilyn Hanold). On board with the diabolical duo are Nadir's goons—a couple of muscular Martians with bald heads and Spock ears—and the prize possession himself, Mull, the space monster, who looks like a distant cousin of the creature from *IT! The Terror From Beyond Space*.

Back on earth, NASA scientist Dr. Adam Steele (played by veteran actor James Karen) has manufactured a robot who looks human in every way. Steele's creation is known to us as Colonel Frank Saunders. When introduced at a press conference, the very personable Saunders freezes up during questions—literally!. Steele and his NASA crew whisk him away and tell reporters that Frank had a long day! After taking care of Frank's glitch, Steele and company prepare him for a flight to Mars.

Nadir and Marcuzan keep watch for anything that is in their atmosphere. Trigger happy Nadir shoots down the rocket carrying Frank. Thinking that it's just another missile, the dastardly doc, and his pal the princess, are alarmed when they find out that the vessel was carrying a pilot, and that he has escaped the explosion by using an emergency parachute to get home safely. The Martians land on earth, find Frank and shoot him. In the process, they realize that he is a robot, since half his face has now been exposed as something that is not human. Frank attacks the Martian assassin and runs away. When Nadir and Marcuzan hear of this news, they are furious. They cannot let Frank get away, for he can foil their plans.

Meanwhile, Frank walks among us, his circuits fried, killing everything in sight. Dr. Steele and his female assistant, Karen Grant (Nancy Marshall), learn that Saunders was spotted in Puerto Rico. Forward to Steele and Grant on a motorcycle. They locate Frank in a cave. Adam tries to repair his creation, and tells Karen to drive back to the hotel where a party of NASA officials await their return.

Our attention is brought to a pool party, where bikini clad gals are hoppin' and boppin' to garage rock. Out of nowhere, the Martians arrive and take several selected beauties back to the ship. As a bonus, the Martians locate Steele's assistant on her route for help. Nadir and Marcuzan are thrilled with the day's catch; however, their joy turns to concern when they learn that Karen possesses an "earth device" that is too advanced for the average female specimen to own. When Karen stays tight-lipped about her knowledge, she is forced to share a cage next to Mull.

In the meantime, Dr. Steele repairs Frank's damage, and they both leave the cave. Steele sees the abandoned motorcycle and knows that Karen didn't make it back. He also notices the spaceship a few yards away, tells Frank to stay put, and drives off to locate a phone to call in NASA.

Does Frank stay put? Will Karen survive? Do the bikini chicks live to dance another day? Who names a creature Mull? So many questions! The answers can be found when you see *Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster*!

The original Doctor Evil, the diabolical Nadir, and his vixen, Princess Marcuzan!

MULL!!!

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SCREEM SPEAKS WITH JAMES KAREN

I first had the pleasure of meeting *FMSM* star James Karen when he shared a booth with *Screem* at the 1996 Chiller Theatre convention. He and I both have roots in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Horror fans remember James for his roles in *Poltergeist*, *Return of the Living Dead* and *Invaders From Mars*. His work in Broadway, television and film is legendary. He has appeared in over two hundred television series, five thousand (!) commercials and has shared screen time with many of the biggest names in Hollywood. Recently, we caught up with Mr. Karen while he was wrapping up *Superman Returns*.

SCREEM : When did you first realize that you wanted to be an actor?

JAMES KAREN: Easy. I was in Wilkes-Barre, probably the first grade when I appeared in a play at the Irem Shrine Temple. It was 1929, I played cowboy Tom Mix. I had the big cowboy hat, chaps, the works. I could not have been more than six years old. I walked across the stage and the hat fell over my head, and I got a big laugh from the audience. And I knew then—that acting was my calling. My first break came in 1936 when then Congressman Dan Flood looked through a window at the Wilkes-Barre Little Theatre, and asked me, "Are you a Boy Scout? Do you have a Boy Scout uniform?" I replied, "Yes, sir". He asked me if I wanted to be in a play called *Front Page* as a Boy Scout. I replied, "Yes, sir!" He told me to ask for my parent's permission and to call him to if it was okay to perform.

SCREEM: You appeared on television as far back as 1948, in the NBC production of *A Christmas Carol*.

JK: TV's were sold back in 1947, but hardly anyone had a television set until 1950. If you were on a TV show, you'd find somebody who owned a set, and the entire family would come over and watch it. *A Christmas Carol* was done live, back then there was no such thing as a rebroadcast, until a few years later. It was directed by television pioneer Fred Coe. It aired live on a Sunday evening with an all-star cast, made up of many well known names from Broadway. It was an incredible experience.

SCREEM: *Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster* was one of your first starring roles, what was your earliest film production?

JK: That would be in 1946, a film called *Journey Into Medicine* for Williard Van Dyke, the great documentary director.

SCREEM: How did you get the role in *Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster*?

JK: I had just come back from working in London. I was dead broke. The British taxes were a killer. I was desperate for money. I was offered five hundred dollars to do the picture, so I took it. We shot for a week in Puerto Rico.

SCREEM: Are you surprised that the film is still talked about today?

JK: You could knock me over with a feather. I cannot believe it. My dear wife has never been able to stay awake through the movie. I've tried to show it to her three or four times, each time she falls asleep!

SCREEM: I've watched *FMSM* many times. Lou Cutell's over the top performance as Dr. Nadir is great.

JK: My wife and I ran into Lou last week at a Professional Dancers Society benefit! He's such a nice man.

SCREEM: You were the spokesman for Pathmark supermarkets. I can remember seeing your commercials as a child!

JK: I did Pathmark commercials for 28 wonderful years. They cared about their company and their customers. They are no longer with us, the company was sold.

SCREEM: 28 years working for the same company doing their commercials—that must be a record.

JK: I'm not so sure about that. A dear friend of mine, Jesse White, was known as the Maytag repair man for many, many years.

SCREEM: I forgot about him! You've done over five thousand commercials. Have you ever sold a product that you thought was odd?

JK: I really can't think of any. I never did a commercial that I did not approve of.

SCREEM: You've worked with so many great directors—David Lynch, Oliver Stone, Tobe Hooper, and Bryan Singer, who you recently worked with in *Superman Returns*.

JK: That's correct, I play Ben Hubbard. Eva Marie Saint plays Superman's adoptive mother. I'm crazy about Tobe Hooper. He's a mad genius. David Lynch is one of the best directors I've ever worked with. He's very easy going. I wish he were doing more films, I liked working for him. I first met Bryan through the Saturn awards. Saturn founder Dr. Donald Reed tried to involve young people in his group, and Bryan liked my films. He was at USC working on a student film project and asked if I would be involved with it. Unfortunately, he ran out of money while filming and phoned me up for advice. He said that his parents were willing to give him the rest of the cash he needed to finish the project, but they weren't sure if it was the right thing to do. Upon Bryan's request, I wrote his parents a letter telling them that I thought Bryan was going to be a major director. I truly believed he was. I said you must give him the money to finish this film. And they did. And now Bryan hires me to be in his pictures! I never think of it as payback, I'm not trying to make myself out to be a noble person at all, but it is true—Bryan is an extraordinary person.

SCREEM: In 2001, you received the prestigious Saturn award for lifetime achievement in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror film. Among fans, your most beloved roles in the genre are *Return of the Living Dead Parts 1* & *2* and *Poltergeist*. What horror film are you fond of?

JK: Tod Browning's *Freaks*. I also love Val Lewton's *Cat People*. I was also crazy about Boris Karloff. I've worked with him. He was a great, great actor. Everybody respected Boris.

Jim Karen and Nancy Marshall are on a mission to find Frankie.

The Walerian Borowczyk Collection

Editor's note. Walerian Borowczyk passed away on February 3rd. He was 82. Cult film fans know him best for the outrageous La Bête, *the explicit* Immoral Tales, *and the nunsploitation classic* Behind Convent Walls. *His admirers include Terry Gilliam and the Brothers Quay. Cult Epics* Walerian Borowczyk Collection *gives us a trio of his erotic films: 1969's* Goto, Island of Love, *his first live action feature film;* The Beast *(1975), by far his most controversial work, and,* Love Rights *(1988), his last motion picture.* Screem *writer Andy Johansen takes a look at the collection.*

Goto, Island of Love (1969)

Goto, Island of Love is Borowczyk's first feature film. He had at this point already gained a reputation as an animated filmmaker, and here he starts off with a little gem about love and power on the fictional island of Goto.

The island of Goto is supposedly somewhere in Europe. Time has somehow frozen in this island nation, since an earthquake in 1887 killed off most of the population. In the time after the earthquake, the island has been ruled by the Goto family. The present ruler is Goto III, and he is married to Glossia, who we later discover is having an affair with Gono, a man in charge of the royal horses. Another protagonist is the criminal Grozo. He manages to survive an execution, and Goto III appoints him the official killer of flies, cleaner of boots, and assistant in keeping the kennels. Grozo is a cunning guy, who eventually craves after Glossia, and is willing to go as far as possible to get what he wants. In a way *Goto* is about how Glossia is desired by all three men. And as the story goes, Grozo's desire will leave fatal consequences for the persons involved.

Compared to *The Beast* and *Love Rites*, *Goto* is more straightforward, since it has the feel of a staged fairytale. While all three movies have a strange fairytale like quality clouding over them, *Goto, Island of Love* manages to be a simple story, and as the tale moves along, spectators should not be especially surprised when they discover how the movie ends. This does not imply that the story is predictable in the common sense of the word.

Borowczyk enjoys mixing the reality of his stories with a style that lures the viewer into a sense that he or she is climbing into another world, a world of cruel fairytales for adults, and this is evident in *Goto*, as it is in *Love Rites*. With this said, it should be pointed out that stylistically the two movies are otherwise difficult to compare, as they are separated by two decades in which Borowczyk matured as a filmmaker. However, the element of fantasy-allegorical filmmaking stayed with him—a legacy found in *Goto* that was carried over from his work in the animated world.

Goto has several interesting scenes. The film begins with a grand setting. A classroom full of children are learning a lesson about the rulers Goto I, II, and the current Goto III. The teacher uses a lenticular portrait, which means that depending where in the classroom one sits, the pupil is always able to view at least one of the three Goto rulers. It is here we see the ugly face of big-brother-is-watching-us dictatorship indoctrination, but since the movie keeps a satirical undertone most of the way, it is still entertaining nevertheless.

Goto makes a perfect companion piece with Jodorowsky's *Fando y Lis*, which is also shot in black and white. Both *Fando* and *Goto* deal with love in surroundings that make it difficult to show feelings. But while *Goto* seems very planned and somewhat tightly choreographed, *Fando* is lightly improvised, leaving a very strong visual and emotional impression. Emotionally, you never really get to care that much for the persons in *Goto*. Both films also make their characters live in a fictional world. While *Goto* is a spatially limited area, the wanderings of *Fando and Lis* in their desert-like search for the city of Tar, seem borderless and endless.

There is very little camera movement in *Goto*, so at times it seems like watching a play. This makes the story come more into focus. Borowczyk seldom wanders off into any kind of experimental style that might put viewers off. Throughout the movie there are a few shots in color, apparently Borowczyk wants to heighten the emotional impact in these scenes, but somehow it is a technique that does not really work.

Goto III is played by Pierre Brasseur, who was seen earlier in Georges Franju's *Eyes Without a Face*, and does a fine job as the dictator. Although Goto III is a dictator, he is portrayed as less of a cold man, and more than a stereotypical ruler. Glossia is played by Ligia Branice, who later became Borowczyk's wife.

THE BEAST (1975)

La Bête (*The Beast*) is one of the most unique sex movies in Euro cult history. Borowczyk wastes little time setting up the subject. For starters, we see a horny French stallion mount another horse, and with much spunk. The opening shot is a good appetizer, it adds energy to the essentially uninteresting family story that follows, before eventually leading to what is the most interesting finale of *The Beast*.

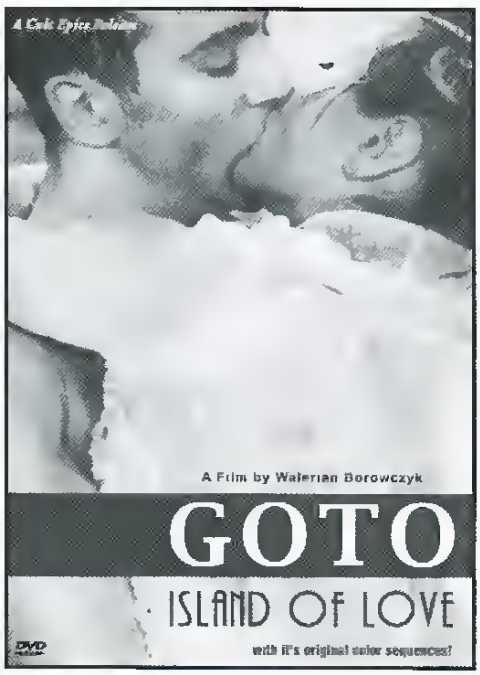
The Esperance clan is an upper class family living in the countryside of France. The son in the family is preparing to marry a woman from London. Her name is Lucy, and she is very fond of masturbating. Lucy is a curious woman. Her wanderings in the mansion lead to the discovery of a female ancestor named Romilda, who once had a very unusual sexual experience in the woods. Towards the finale of the movie we see a flashback, as Lucy imagines what took place. Romilda, a beautiful woman with corset and wig, runs after a lamb into the forest. A strange roar comes from out of nowhere, and suddenly she sees that the lamb is dead. The Beast finishes off his prey, and notices that dessert is nearby in the form of Romilda. His craving is not hunger, but sexual desire. In what can be best described as mock beastiality, the creature has his way with Romilda, and although she is fearful of him at first, her lust is stronger than the consequences of her actions. It's entirely amusing, vulgar, scandalous, and peculiar.

Normally, I would be very critical towards movies that implement such a romanticized view on rape, but it actually seems like Borowczyk can get away with it here, due to the uniqueness of the circumstance. On a deeper level, it can be argued that Borowczyk tells us that humans and animals share the same lust for instinctual sexual fulfilment. That seems to be the most obvious explanation for why this movie was made at all. Or perhaps he just wanted to shock bourgeois moviegoers. *The Beast* was banned for many years. And understandably, it was very shocking for its time.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

The story of the Esperance family itself passes as a light black comedy, somewhat comparable to the anti-bourgeois movies that Luis Bunuel was known for. However, this manuscript does not have the strength to venture into such area. If this was a co-production between Bunuel and Borowczyk, then we might of had a good combo. The weird family story manages barely to keep us interested. By the time we wait for the bizarre beast to appear, we've lost what little interest we had in this picture.

On a purely artistic level, despite many nice details scattered throughout the movie, *The Beast* does not reach the level of *Love Rites* or *Goto, Island of Love*, but it will be remembered more for its subject matter. The movie would have worked better as a *Beauty and the Beast*-like tale, and perhaps in shorter form.



LOVE RITES (1988)

On the surface, *Love Rites* is about a man named Hugo and a woman named Myriam. They meet for the first time in the subway where Hugo is sitting next to her. Myriam is meticulously putting on her make-up, and Hugo is obviously attracted to her. As she leaves the stop, Hugo decides to run after her, but does not make it out the door. With desire fuelling his every move, he rushes back to find where she got off, and, voila! There she is. The pair spend the rest of the day exploring the realm of sexual pleasure—first in a subway station, next in a church, and finally at a boudoir, where things take an unexpected turn.

Does this sound like a boring run of the mill French romantic movie? Do not be fooled. It definitely is nothing of the kind. If you have seen any Borowczyk flick, you will know what I mean.

This gem of a picture is indeed a playful and odd story that feels like an urban art house fairytale. What's most impressive about *Love Rites* is the way Borowczyk chooses to tell this story. Many of the scenes and settings are very long, but were handled so beautifully that it feels like we are on a trip to an art museum.

The long scene in the subway manages to create a very interesting frame for the meeting of Hugo and Myriam. In the midst of a rough, urban tube station, the sounds and reactions from people around them are ignored by the couple. In the confines of the gritty subway, they start to explore their bodies. At the church, the pair elaborate more on their passion. It seems very meditative and sensual at the same time (as well as being a bit controversial to say the least), to show erotic feelings in a sacred place. When Hugo and Myriam reach the boudoir for the erotic climax, the protagonists unite in a higher state of pleasure.

Borowczyk shows what a skilled artist he is, creating art in scenes where many other directors would have probably failed. Borowczyk had a reputation for being a great animator, in the same league as Jan Svankmajer. *Love Rites* plays with style that Svankmajer also enjoyed.

The dialogue in *Love Rites* often contains references to literature, art, and works which may not be familiar to most viewers. However, this adds to the overall mysterious atmosphere, and may even inspire viewers to look up some of these cultural references.

Typical of Borowczyk fare, the erotic side of the movie is quite sensual and professionally made, so well that it feels more like art house eroticism. It never gets too explicit in a Tinto Brass kind of way, or even in comparison to other of Borowczyk's works.

The finale of *Love Rites* could be labelled as surreal or metaphorical, reminiscent of the style of Spanish director Fernando Arrabal and even Pasolini's *Oedipus Rex*. The ending can have various interpretations. One of the joys of surreal movies is the relative freedom to make a personal interpretation, discovering things that may or may not have been implied by the director.

The character of Hugo is played by Mathieu Carriere (who gave possibly his strongest performance in *Young Torless*, by director Volker Schlöndorff). Through the whole movie he seems like a young innocent (and a sensually promiscuous) man who is participating in an erotic fairytale adventure. At first he is attracted to Myriam and is determined to find her at the subway. He forgets all about his other appointments. As the romance continues, he more or less goes into a trance, while Myriam leads him through obscure streets and places in the city, and finally to the secret boudoir. This is where they engage in a fulfilment of sexual acts. The bedroom is also the place where the tone of the film changes to an eerie atmosphere . . .

The role of Myriam is played by veteran actress Marina Pierro, who worked with Borowczyk on several other movies. She is portrayed as a mysterious seductress, a siren luring Hugo with her sensual appearance. Pierro plays her character to perfection. She is beautiful, and fits well with the sensual and mysterious being that Myriam is. *Screem* readers may be familiar with Pierro's work in Jean Rollin's *Living Dead Girl*.

It is difficult to categorize *Love Rites*. It takes elements from such wide areas as erotica, horror, and art house. Depending on how open to the film one may be upon viewing it, there is plenty of room for personal interpretation to what is going on. But *Love Rites* is very different from the more well known *La Bete* and *Goto, Island of Love*, which should not be compared to this movie, as they should be judged separately.

Fortunately, *Love Rites* will be seen by a wider variety of viewers, due to its inclusion in the *Walerian Borowczyk Collection* DVD box set. For further interest in the story itself, *Love Rites* is adapted from a short story by French writer André Pieyre de Mandiargues (1909-1991), and is supposedly from his book *La Maree*.

Andy Johansen

CAN YOU HANDLE THE *PLEASURES OF THE DAMNED*???

Article and interview by Greg Goodsell

There are countless direct-to-video movies, made by fans, that try really hard to shock, or try to pay slavish homage to other films, or even try to impart a serious message. What's so refreshing about *Pleasures of the Damned*, compiled by two Maryland-based fanboys is that it doesn't try at all. The story cobbles together various plot elements, including an evil band of devil cultists resurrected from the dead, an evil hippie cult leader played by two actors, one white, the other black, a band of greasy bikers in very bad wigs, and, a Vietnam War veteran hero with *Six Million Dollar Man* moves.

It's bad enough to be stuck in the woods, but these guys still think it's 1974!

Adding to the film's mystique is an elaborate back story. Prefacing the film's action, titles explain that *Pleasures of the Damned* is actually the long-lost and banned film of an obscure Italian director, brought to the public's attention for the first time. This notion is cheerfully blown out of the water when the film's bikers (the budget didn't allow for choppers) all pile into a 2002 Scion! *Pleasures* is goofy fun and calls to mind the somewhat similar *Jesus Christ, Vampire Hunter*. *Screem* magazine got together with the *Pleasures*' writer-director Mark Leake and cameraman-editor Mark Colegrove for a little chat.

SCREEM: The elaborate fictitious back-story for the film seems to be taking a jab at horror fans (and perhaps the popular culture at large) who laud largely unseen films as unheralded masterpieces. Is this the intent of the film?

MARK LEAKE: Since I'm one of those obsessive horror dorks, who feels compelled to hunt down every other obscure film I hear that's "shocking," I guess ultimately the joke's on me. So frankly, yes, that is part of the gag.

MARK COLEGROVE: The back-story was an afterthought after we finished the film, and although it is somewhat of an "in-joke," it's mostly just a marketing gimmick for us. For me, part of the fun was waiting to see how many people walked out of the premiere, after they realized that they have been had. I was a little disappointed since I only counted two walk-outs, but we also inspired an angry letter to the Baltimore City Paper, and that kind of reaction just fuels my weird sense of humor.

SCREEM: What specific films do you think were unworthy of the word-of-mouth, I've-seen-it-and-you-haven't status?

MARK LEAKE: Usually when I'm disappointed in a cult film it's because I was expecting something else than what was delivered, which is due to the fact that the impact of a film is different for anyone who watches it. For example, when I first saw *Island of Death*, I was barely able to make it through the whole film. It made me feel nauseous and violated. When Colegrove first watched it, he thought it was funny (I was even told that he masturbated to it). Now, when I first saw *Murder-Set-Pieces*, I barely even noticed the violence (which is what the film is really known for). It was the Argento-like flow of the camera work that had me captivated. So really, I don't think it's the case that a lot of films fail to live up to their reputation, so much as it's a case that most reputations are simply inadequate and one-dimensional (with the exception of Pasolini's *Salo*, the word sick works quite fine).

MARK COLEGROVE: For the record, the incest and goat rape scenes in *Island of Death* are totally hot. Now if you wanna talk about overrated pieces of crap, I'm gonna have to pull the *C.H.U.D.* card.

SCREEM: Is *Pleasures of the Damned* shot on film? 8 mm? 16 mm? Silent? Film-looked? What was the process? How long did the film take to shoot? What are the film's correct credits for director, producer, etc.?

MARK COLEGROVE: We shot on a Sony VX2100, which is just a 3-chip MiniDV camera. We converted it from 30 frames per second to 24 in After Effects, and added some grain in the mix to try to give it that old film look. Ideally, if we had the money, I would have liked to have shot it on 16mm reversal stock. We worked on it, on and off for about a year.

"I beg of you, take my brain, but don't touch the handle-bar mustache!"

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

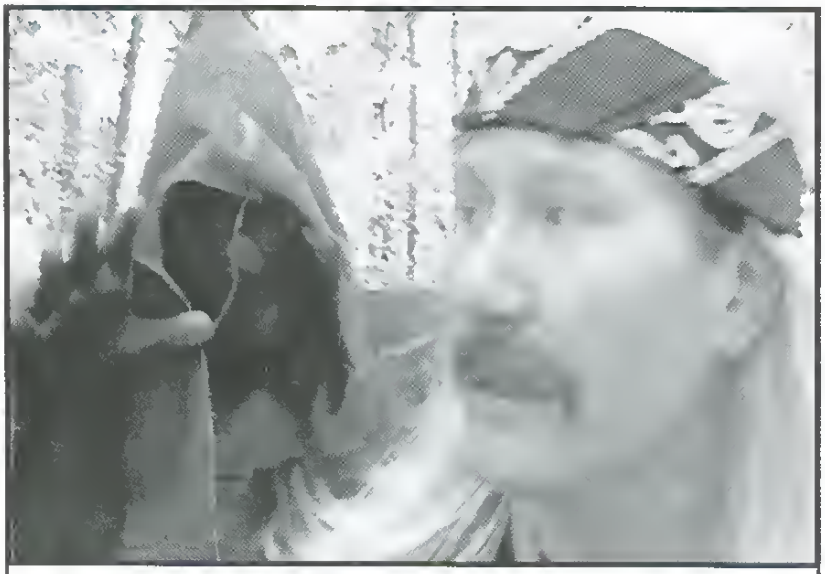
MARK LEAKE: Now as for the true credits of the film? The inherent problem that comes with any film on a shoestring budget is an accurate credit listing, because everyone found themselves doing multiple things. If you weren't acting, you were doing lights, or preparing a costume. The directing of the film, half the time, was a group process, and the camera got passed around like a choirboy in the Vatican. This film was truly a group effort (plus half the cast are ashamed to have their real name associated with such sleaze). One of my favorite pastimes when watching micro-budget films is to watch the "directors commentary" when it's available. I love listening to some jerk-off try to talk about his/her stupid piece of cinematic trash like it was a major motion picture, instead of reveling in the fact that it's not. The true renegade filmmaker is an artist. If you want to see "emotionally moving," relegated garbage that once again reaffirms your controversial belief that racism is just wrong (which is why you only lock your car door when there's more than one walking by), go to a Jerry Bruckheimer film. Now if you want to see people raped and mutilated in a comical fashion, then we're the dirt-bags you're looking for. So don't ever expect to see a DVD of *Pleasures* put out that has some pathetic commentary on it, about a bunch of stupid garbage anyone could care less about, just so we can feel like "legitimate" filmmakers.

SCREEM: What story elements and from what sources does the film draw upon? (I see the references to the *Blind Dead* series and *The Six Million Dollar Man*, as well as the Vietnam veteran archetype).

MARK COLEGROVE: Fulci and Argento played a huge part, and the cannibal films as well, like *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Cannibal Ferox* and *Jungle Holocaust*. The special effects were done more in the fashion of *Bloodsucking Freaks* or pretty much any Herschell Gordon Lewis Film.

MARK LEAKE: The *Blind Dead* thing is sheer coincidence (or at least a subconscious rip-off). The story mainly derives from *I Drink Your Blood*, *Satan's Children* and *Burial Ground*. The dialog was mainly (ripped-off) or rather, derived from Andy Milligan's style. (Nothing quite tops *Torture Dungeon* or the *Seeds of Sin* when it comes to sleaze). As for the Vietnam thing, there was a universal rule in the late-seventies and early-eighties; all action heroes must have done at least one tour in the 'Nam. I have no clue who made that rule up, but damn if I don't stick by it. I feel that people wouldn't have cared as much about the romantic interlude between Jack Steel and Evelyn if he hadn't had been a Vietnam vet.

SCREEM: Since the film is apparently shot in Maryland, is there any connection whatsoever with Don Dohler? John Waters? (I see the early films of Waters as being the movie's spiritual antecedent.)



"Heed this warning my son. There is no such thing as a good time to join a Doobie Brothers cover band."

MARK COLEGROVE: If there was, we'd probably have decent distribution by now. I'm a relatively big fan of Waters, and I've seen him give a couple talks before. He's the pope of trash, and I'll still say *Pink Flamingos* is the trashiest film ever made. I can't say I've even seen a Dohler movie before, but I do respect the fact that he's been able to keep making his sleaze for so long.

MARK LEAKE: Waters' early career serves as a road map for local filmmakers. Of course nowadays when he films, the cops clear the street. When we film, we clear out before the cops arrive. So we do have law enforcement as a connection.

SCREEM: A lot of the film's humor is based on homosexuality in a very politically incorrect way. Is this a conscious tweaking of culturally sensitive taboos?

MARK LEAKE: Actually, since most of the gay humor is performed by the bikers, and since in the film they don't see themselves in that light, this joke is more directed towards half the high-school bullies in America. I think the scene when Paco is about to rape the boy in the woods, and he keeps on calling the boy a "faggot," well, that says it all. Plus, it's easy to find guys who will debase themselves for free. Women generally want to get paid when being humiliated (with the exception of the girl who played Julia).

MARK COLEGROVE: I think the major problem with films these days is that they walk on eggshells trying to be overly politically correct, just to cater to the widest possible audience. Offensive material gets people's attention, pushes buttons, and for these reasons, makes for some of the best jokes on shows like *South Park* or *Chappele's Show*. All the offensive stuff in *Pleasures* is delivered in a goofy way (i.e. using a ridiculous amount of reverb every time "Negro Mountain" is mentioned), suffice to say none of it is serious.

SCREEM: The evil cult leader is played by how many actors in total?

MARK LEAKE: Two. Even though we tried to make the transition seamless, somehow people always seem to pick up on it.

SCREEM: What is the significance of the boom mike smacking the head of one of the actors, as the film's sound is totally post-synch anyway?

MARK COLEGROVE: That's our most obvious "bad movie" joke. If you think we were trying to make a good movie, by the time you see the boom mike, all bets should be off. For the record, we fired the boom guy after we saw the rushes.

SCREEM: How would you counter the argument that films that are intentionally bad are never as funny as those that are unintentionally so?

MARK LEAKE: Firstly, I would tell anyone who said something like that, to go rent *Lost Skeleton of Cadavra*, then come back and talk crap. Secondly, what makes most "intentionally bad" movies almost unbearable to watch is due to the stupid jokes most of them will try to slip in. That's why, from the beginning of *Pleasures*, we decided that the way to make the funniest bad movie was to simply make a bad movie for real. That's why there are very few things in the film that could be taken as direct humor. Most of the humor relies on the sleaze, and cheesy production.

MARK COLEGROVE: It's a shame most people don't realize they are making a bad movie during production. Chances are, if you only have a DV camera, $3,000, and all teenage actors, your film is going to be dreadful, especially if you try to adapt a serious or dramatic script. The biggest problem with most low-budget films I've seen is the acting. A lot of new writers try to craft this witty Kevin Smith or Tarantino-esque dialogue, chock full of pop-culture references, and nine times out of ten, the actor isn't strong enough to deliver it. By going with post-synced dialogue, we avoided the acting problem all together.

SCREEM: What do you hope to accomplish with this feature? Cult recognition? Money to make another film? Cameras with synch sound?

MARK LEAKE: One day in the future, when I'm obese and bald, I want to be sitting at a table in the corner of some horror convention dealer room, ignoring some other obese, bald guy, who remembers my movie and loves it, so I can try to flirt with the "adult" model, who has a table next to mine and who is thoroughly repulsed by me (especially the enormous size of my bloated ankles). Perhaps if I buy her pictures, she'll like me.

MARK COLEGROVE: I just want enough recognition to be offered a DP position on a Disney movie where Tim Allen plays a talking catheter. Then I'll move to L.A. and sell out big time, and always be too busy to meet up with anyone I worked with on *Pleasures*.

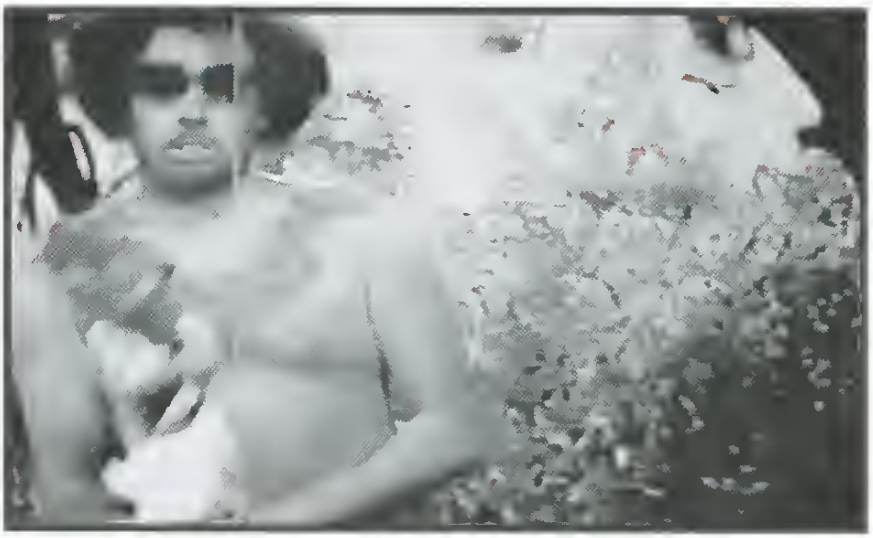
SCREEM: Finally, is *Pleasures of the Damned* ultimately an un-hip film for hip people?

TOGETHER: Screw hip people! This film was made by fans of drive-in cinema, for other fans, and anyone else who has a sick sense of humor. If you're a mongoloid leper with five arms, who has never seen a film before *Pleasures*, then watches *Pleasures*, and you like it, then damn it, I like you. That's right, anyone who likes *Pleasures of the Damned* is cool in my book (just please don't try to personally contact me if you actually have leprosy).

MARK COLEGROVE: Info on upcoming screenings can always be found at www.direwitfilms.com. We are still looking for distribution, and also investment in *Isle of the Damned*, which follows Jack Steele further in his adventures on a cannibal island, in search of the lost treasure of Marco Polo. Cheers! Thanks guys!

Admit it. We have all met this guy before, either at a film convention or standing in line to see *Revenge of the Sith*.

(Above) One less arm to salute with! (Below) The technique of beating someone to death with their own arm was mastered by Sleepy La Beef circa 1968 in *The Monster and the Stripper* a.k.a. *The Exotic Ones*.



"Dude, *there's* my car!"

DANGEROUS MEN
IT'S NOTHING LIKE YOU'VE EVER SEEN!

BY GREG GOODSELL

Had director Edward D. Wood Jr. lived long enough to have helmed straight-to-video action adventure epics, the result may have resembled something like *Dangerous Men* (2005)—but not really. Said film has been packing in hipster audiences at midnight shows in Los Angeles, and word of mouth is building it up as the next cult movie sensation.

Shot in Hollywood by Iranian emigre director John S. Rad over a period of several years (but more likely spanning a few decades), *Dangerous Men* defies easy categorization or analysis. Director Rad says that this is intentional. In either case, the film left a theater of jaded audience members in stitches, and unlike other "bad" classics, is never boring.

Dangerous Men's opening titles provide the first unintentional snicker. Playing against crashing waves, the titles duly note that the film is created and written by, produced by, features original music with lyrics by, executive produced by, as well as casted by, and with location and set design by director Rad.

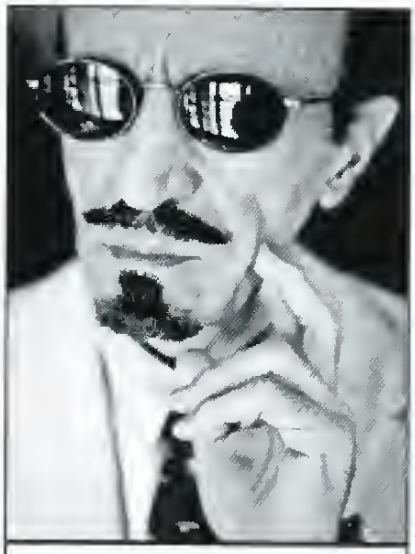
Happily engaged couple Mira and Daniel (Melody Wiggins and Kelay Miller) are seen smooching on a beach. Two unwashed bikers (George Derby and John Clure) wander on to the scene. A fight breaks out, and one of the bikers is killed along with Daniel. Mira immediately professes her love and admiration for the surviving biker, and both leave the two corpses on the beach for a romantic candle-lit dinner.

In a motel room, Mira demands that the biker make love to her by kissing her knees and belly button. Producing a knife hidden between the cheeks of her ass, she stabs the goon to death. Mira then embarks on a one-woman vigilante spree, disguising herself as a prostitute and searching Los Angeles' meanest streets for male prey.

While some viewers fear the film will just degenerate into a *Ms. 45* (1979) knockoff, this strand is disposed with entirely, and *Dangerous Men* then focuses on a headstrong young detective named David (Michel Gradilone, with bizarre eyebrows), the brother of Daniel who strives to put the bikers out of business.

In his article on the film for L.A. Weekly, author Paul Cullum enumerates *Dangerous Mens'* multitude of sins: "Background paintings leap out of the frame. Key exposition is delivered away from the camera. Actors appear to repeat key speeches phonetically. Kung fu sequences employ reverse zooms, sucking the action out of the scene. A biker bar prominently features an espresso machine." To this we may add . . . sympathetic characters being killed with happy, upbeat music playing in the background; actors reading their lines directly off the script onscreen; Mira's mother apparently being played by Mira (Wiggins) in a wig; an impromptu belly dance interrupting a sex scene; people talking into unplugged telephones; a would-be rapist going from evil, to sympathetic, to comic, and back again. The film's most notorious scene features Mira kneeling on the beach as a ballad sung by director Rad is heard, the song's lyrics written in the sand around her.

Dangerous Mens' unintentional humor largely springs from its breaks with film grammar. Audiences weaned on television and movies at an early age giggle uncontrollably at the film's rude, rough-and-ready editing. In the manner of David Lynch, laughs arise from scenes going on for just a few seconds longer than they should. As one police detective warns David, "Just one thing . . . " We expect to cut to a reaction close-up of David, but the camera dallies on the detective's face for two seconds too long. "Stay away from those bikers!"



Director John S. Rad ponders his next production.

Some of the humor is engendered by dry and sophisticated means, intentional or not. As the dragnet around Mira intensifies, a detective sonorously declares that she is a threat to herself and society. Instead of stark black-and-white police mug shots, the detective thumbs through some low-grade color pix of Mira vamping it up in some glamour shots courtesy of the nearby mall.

Director Rad is very pleased with the reception *Dangerous Men* has engendered so far. Fed up with the "don't call us, we'll call you" attitude of the Hollywood establishment, Rad four-walled his feature in a few L.A. theaters. The few who did see it (some estimate as little as six or seven, one seeing it three times) began an Internet buzz, until the cult movie audience clamored for repeat screenings. A genial, grandfatherly character in person, director Rad insists that some of the laughs in his film are intentional, and is pleased that his movie is garnering an audience.

The following interview was first conducted in person before a midnight screening in Los Angeles. I submitted the printed version of the interview to Rad for corrections and suggestions, and he returned the below with his own handwritten notations. Rad's command of the English language is somewhat limited, but the following piece got his full endorsement and approval.

SCREEM: How long did it take to shoot *Dangerous Men*?

JOHN S. RAD: Because I am involved in other businesses—I'm an architect, I'm a poet, I'm a composer and other stuff I'm busy with—it took me (rather) long to finish this film.

SCREEM: Was this your first attempt at filmmaking?

JOHN S. RAD: No, I've done more films here, in Hollywood, and also overseas. It's not my first.

SCREEM: What were your other U.S. credits?

JOHN S. RAD: *Under the Cover of Night*, *Tough and Restless* and this one. I write, I produce, I direct, I do most of the film by myself. Even the music. Totally in control.

SCREEM: Is *Dangerous Men* a revenge drama?

JOHN S. RAD: No, my technique is absolutely different. I feel that I have the idea that in two hours you see a film, it is like you go to a university. You learn a lot or you may lose a lot by a film. So, if you're a right person and you like your society, the best thing is (to) make something like guidance that is fun. So my film always goes different ways, and altogether is one thing, to see what is bad and what is good, what is right and what's wrong in a fun way.

SCREEM: So your films have messages and morals?

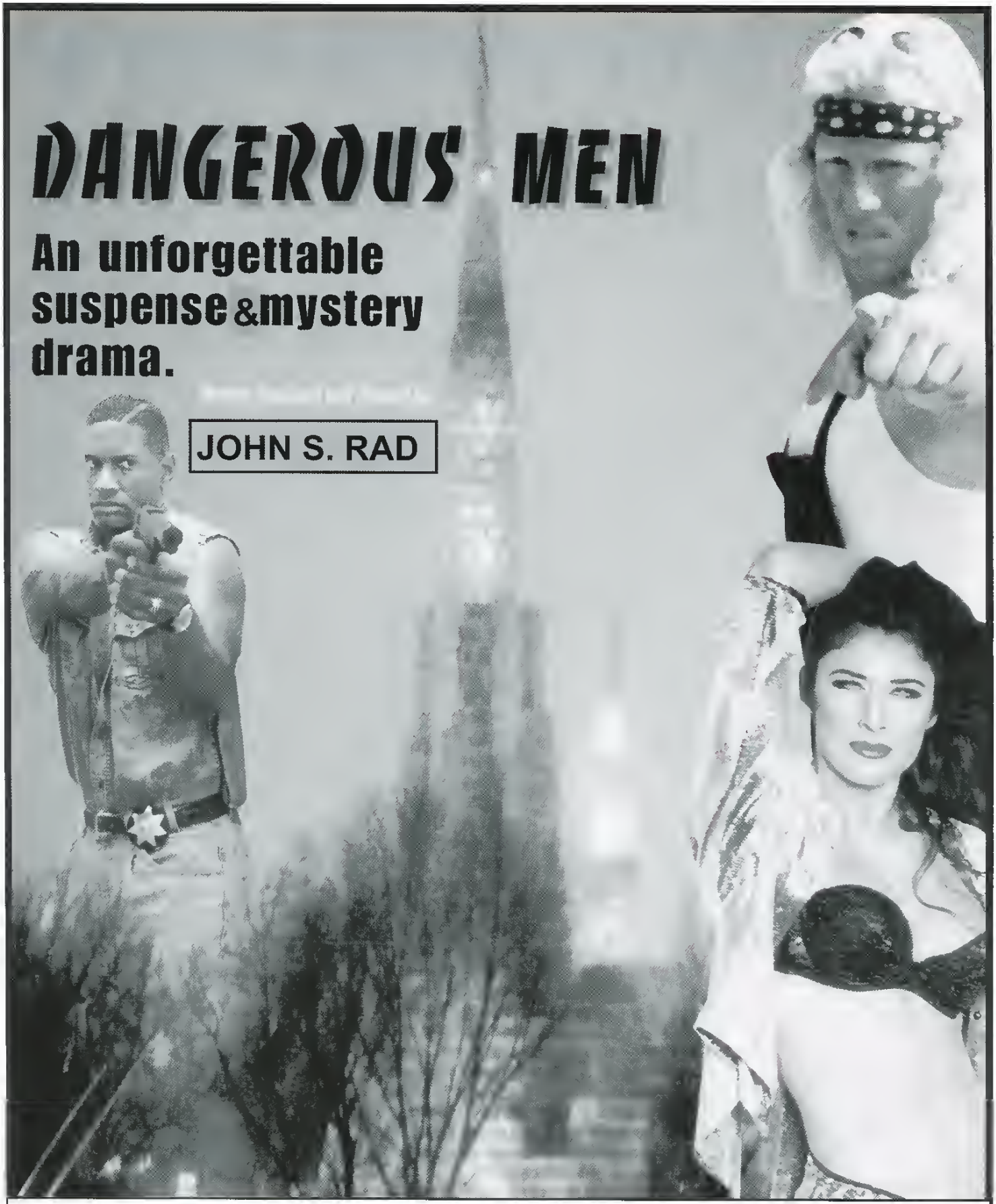
JOHN S. RAD: Definitely! Messages, which is what I explain to you.

SCREEM: Would you call *Dangerous Men* an action-adventure film?

JOHN S. RAD: I just can't say just action and adventure. There's a lot of action and adventure in it. It's funny too, tonight you'll see. You'll crack up. There are parts that you are really convinced that you understood, the scene at that moment, but you're not, because you don't know what will happen next. It takes you another way. And then it takes you to the same place. There's a lot of fun in this film. Often, I check the reaction of viewers; it's really great and you'll see it yourself tonight. I have seen quite a few people coming to see *Dangerous Men*. When they were questioned why you saw the film three to four times, they amazingly say it's a lot of fun and I'll go again.

SCREEM: You directed some films in your native country of Iran?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



For information, visit www.dangerousmenthemovie.com, or write to Sima Sim International Corp. P.O. Box 11344 Beverly Hills, CA 90213 USA. *Dangerous Men* is a film like no other—you've never seen anything like it! For booking information, please go to our website.

JOHN S. RAD: I did. There were three. My first movie won a prize, and was pretty famous. Years and years later, people remember, it was very famous and popular. The first one that took a prize was *Zir-E Poost-E Shab*, which means in English *Under the Skin of the Night*. The next one, which was a great movie, I don't think after this time, to my knowledge any film had more than 10,000 in the cast. We had over 10,000 cast (in) that film, called *If a Leaf Never Falls*. And then I had another film called *Plus and Minus*. That was a very touching story, I never forgot that film.

Anyway when (the Ayatollah) Khomeini was brought to Iran, which as you know, millions of brains left the country. And unfortunately, their technique is not the right way . . . of running a country. As we see now, there is no work and nobody is happy from this government. Such a country with such a big history. Thousands years ago, proudly, as you know, everybody knows, go to the United Nations! His handwriting is there! The first human rights by Cyrus the Great, the Iranian king. Now, unfortunately sometimes we are ashamed to say we are Iranian because of this government.

SCREEM: There seems to be a lot of recent Iranian films that seem to be opening up to the west . . .

JOHN S. RAD: Yes, it is because there is a lot of Iranian, Persians here in Southern California. Do you know how many Iranians are here? Over half a million! And they are rich, bright and very caring! You don't see any crime—well, there is, but there are very, very few. Why? Because of their nature, and because of their ten thousand years of civilization before the birth of Christ. But you see a lot of crime everyday, I don't want to mention names . .

SCREEM: Do you see film as serving an ambassador-like role to other nations and cultures?

JOHN S. RAD: I'll be honest with you. I'm writing a book in that respect right now. That's a very exciting book. Actually, I don't read anyone's writing, I don't see anybody's films, because I like my work to be original. My creativity! If it is good, it's different good. If it's bad, it's a different bad. That's my way of (working).

SCREEM: Is there a lot of excitement over *Dangerous Men*?

JOHN S. RAD: Lot of excitement! You'll see tonight, you'll talk about it, maybe you'll like it, and maybe you won't. But I'll bet that you love it.

SCREEM: What reactions have you been getting?

JOHN S. RAD: I'll be honest with you . . . I never expected. I have a lot of e-mails. From Europe, from other countries, inside the country, other states . . . Many others, many press, TV shows, they ask me for interviews, radio stations ask me for interviews. This was really unexpected.

SCREEM: Did you originally rent out movie theaters to get the movie shown?

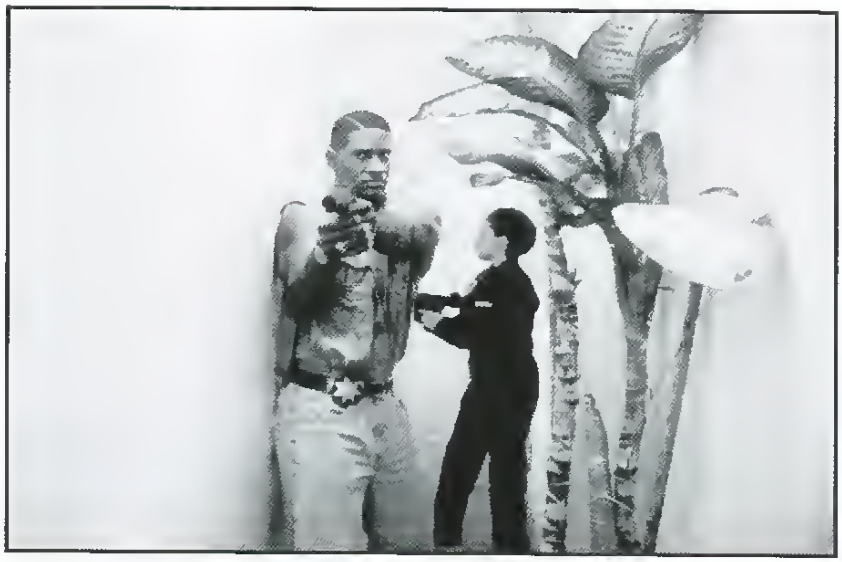
JOHN S. RAD: First of all, as usual, in Hollywood, when you're not known, they don't even pay attention to you! (Laughs). They did even the same thing to me! "We'll call you sir!" So what I did was rented theaters and I did at such a risk, I showed it, people loved it, and now they're after me. Why don't you go to www.dangerousmenthemovie.com?

SCREEM: Got any offers from the major studios?

JOHN S. RAD: Oh, plenty. There's a stack in my car, do you want to see them? My pleasure! Plenty! (Laughs)

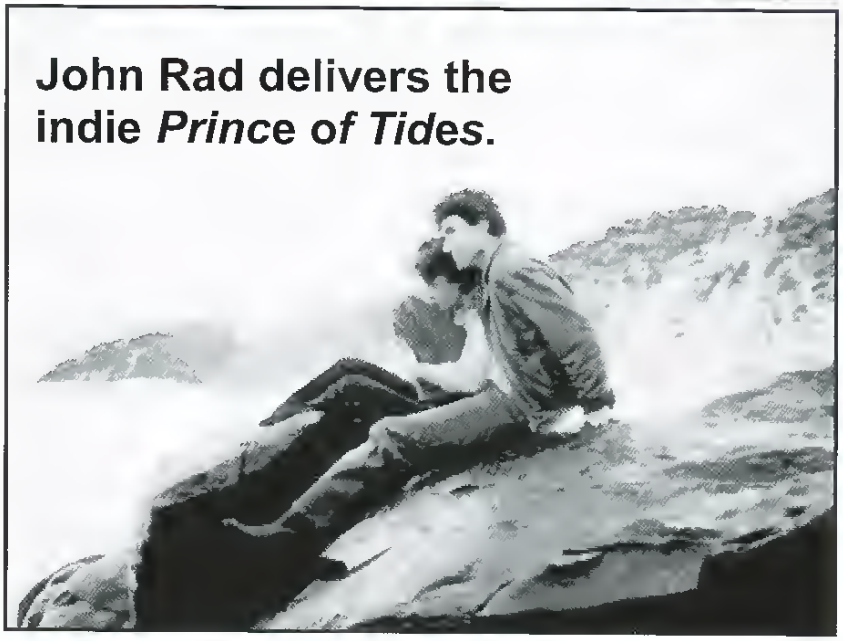
SCREEM: What is your next film?

JOHN S. RAD: The next one, I'm writing the script right now. That is something I'm sure that will be different than any other film that you've seen in your life. Also, I have a script to shoot if any producer or investor would like to invest low-budget and gain high box office, I'll be more than happy to talk about it. For more information, write to my address: P.O. Box 11344 Beverly Hills, CA 90213.



(ABOVE) "Don't move, or the plant gets it!"
(BELOW) Love means never having to say you're narcoleptic.

John Rad delivers the indie *Prince of Tides*.



TALKIN' TRASH WITH GIUSEPPE ANDREWS

I believe we have a winner! This is the opening shot from Guiseppe's *Period Piece*.

INTERVIEW BY BLAKE MONAHAN

Giuseppe Andrews is probably best known to genre fans as the wacked out, party obsessed Deputy Winston in Eli Roth's *Cabin Fever*. Since that role however, Giuseppe has earned himself a whole new legion of fans with his films *Trailer Town* and *Touch Me in the Morning*. Giuesppe is unlike any other filmmaker to date, his movies play out like the end result of John Waters and Larry Clark watching *Bum Fights* at Werner Herzog's house. With his trademark songs and ensemble trailer park cast featuring Bill Nowlin, Walt Dongo, Vietnam Ron and Tyree, Giuseppe creates an altogether new movie-watching experience. *Screem* had a chance to sit down with Giuseppe recently, despite his busy schedule of shooting his own films, as well as appearing in such genre contributions as Tim Sullivan's *2001 Maniacs*.

SCREEM: Give me a background on how you got into filmmaking.

GUISEPPE ANDREWS: Well, I lived in FL with my parents, and the first film they took me to see was *ET*. I ran out of the theater when it got dark, and I did not watch another film until I was 17. I was living in a tool shed behind my dad's trailer, and the woman, who cut my hair all the time, turned me on to Fassbinder, who I had never heard of before. So I tracked down a bunch of his films and immediately fell in love with the whole thing . . . the freedom of the ideas. Because I didn't know much about the medium at the time, I just saw it from a totally clear perspective and just saw a beautiful medium, where you could mix music and thoughts and images and give someone an exceptional feeling. So, I said right away that I wanted to get my own camera and explore my own ideas and thoughts and images.

SM: I have heard that in addition to Fassbinder, you were also influenced by Werner Herzog?

GA: Yeah, well a couple years ago, I got to meet him through some friends of mine who were working at Anchor Bay, and they invited me to a party where I got to talk with him and meet him. By that time I had seen a bunch of his films. I got to sit with him through some screenings of his films. His films, as well, were a big early influence as were some other filmmakers too. Wim Wenders' documentary on Nicholas Ray, *Lighting Over Water*, that piece also inspired me in some way. I was wearing an eye patch after that because [Ray] wore an eye-patch! I don't know if that's neither here nor there but . . . (laughs).

Guiseppe Andrews comes prepared for "meet and greet the critics" day.

SM: Herzog is widely regarded for his films which are, for the most part, intense character studies. I think that the same could be said for your films, although in your films, this is more reality based. How did you choose the people for your films?

GA: Sounds weird, but they kind of chose me. When I first got the camera, the first thing that happened was—I used to see a guy, who would sit outside of his trailer, talking to himself, drinking boxes of beer while sitting in a lawn chair. I decided to talk to him one day, and then we wound up drinking every night together for a year, watching Humphrey Bogart films. I was totally blown away by the kind of person he was. That was Bill Nowlin. I just started filming stories with him and he was very into it. I made a documentary with him, which I no longer have, and I showed it to my friend, director Adam Rifkin. He loved Bill right away and said, "You should make a film, and I will finance it." So I started asking Bill who he knew around town that would star in the film? By then, Walt Dongo had come over to drink a few times, and then he introduced me to Vietnam Ron. Then, I would go over, and Ron would say, "Well I know some people that would be into this . . ." All the people I met through them had some kind of magic to them. If they didn't, I wouldn't have filmed them.

SM: Did you know from the start that you would be shooting a series of films?

GA: I didn't know it was going to turn into a bunch of films, we took it one thing at a time. I gotta tell you it was not like a film process at all. I can't think of any other film that has existed where some of the people don't remember being in the films at all. This happens a lot in my films. They couldn't understand that I was making a movie almost. It was like here is the guy that we know with his camera. The camera became invisible because I was just interrupting what they were doing. If they were getting high, I would just come up with a scene and say why don't you say this. It was magical in that way. In the beginning when we did *Trailer Town*, it was like that. As it went on, they started to understand more and more that they were part of a story.

SM: How aware are the actors of the finished product? Have they even seen the films?

GA: Most of them didn't really have the time or the concentration to watch them. Vietnam Ron, though, lives for the movies, he watches the films over and over. He is really into them. Tyree, I tried to show him some, but he would rather just drink and mumble. They see it from a different perspective. Mostly they would rather just do it. Film isn't really their life, so they really don't understand what we are doing at any time.

SM: Tell me about your upcoming holiday film.

I decided to do a really strange holiday film that people could put on every year, kinda like a cult xmas film. And so I decided to make *Chicory*. While I was making it, I went and got a burrito and the damned thing poisoned me like you wouldn't believe, man. I was so messed up. They were dragging me to all these hospitals. I thought for sure I was dying . . . it was going on for weeks. I was on the toilet all night exploding in tears. I went to the doctor, and she said, "You've got what they get in Mexico from drinking the water." I got a fecal bug she said, and it was eating me alive! So, in the middle of the film, I was struggling to edit with this unbelievable fever. It was during this time that the film's new title came to me—*Chicory and the Diarrhea Nightmare*. I got this really wild holiday film out of this fecal bug!

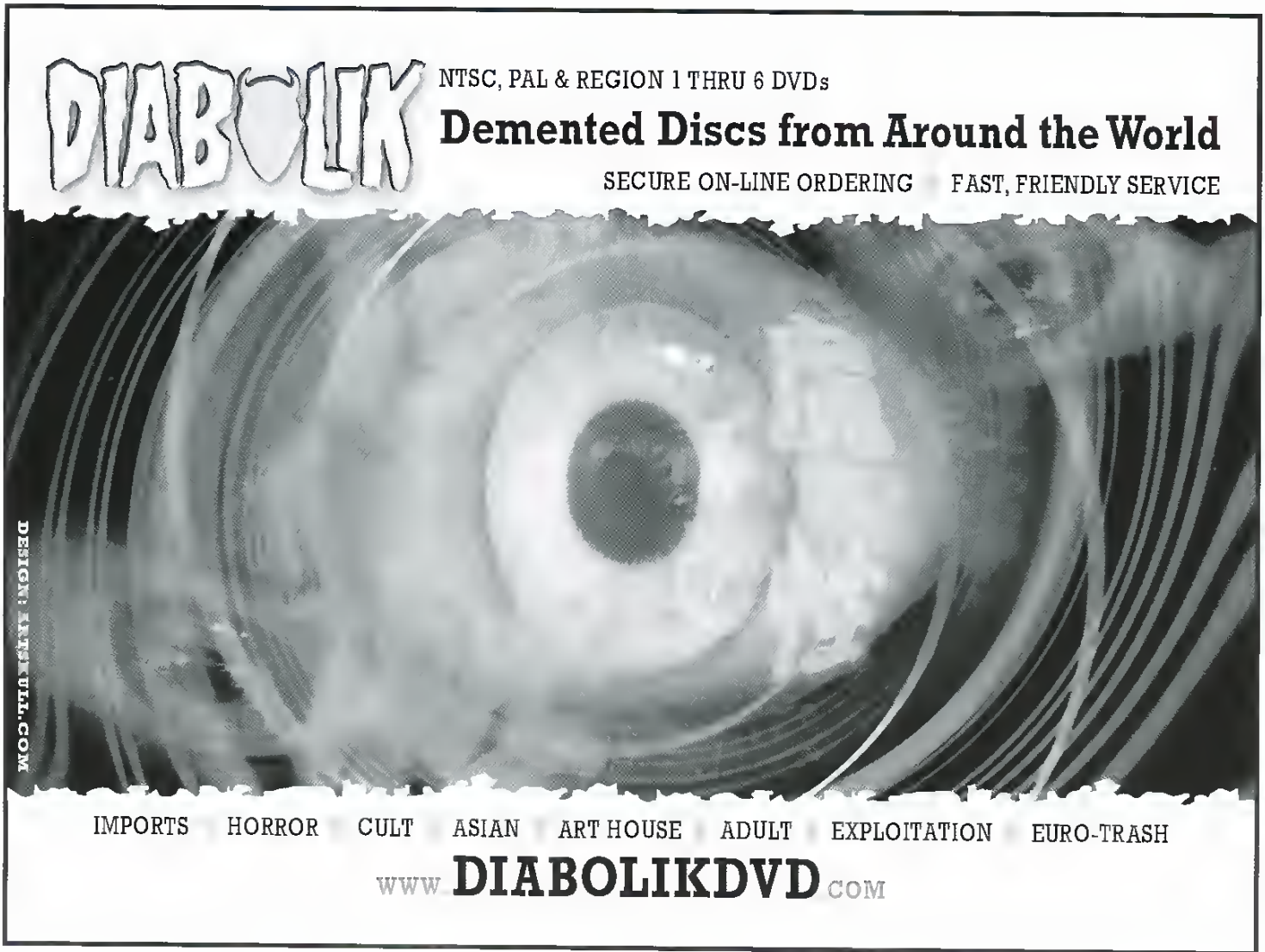
SM: You compose most of the music for your films yourself. How big a part of the filmmaking process is this for you?

GA: The songs are a big part of my films because sometimes whole films come from a song. I usually start every film by writing a musical piece that turns me on enough to jump into the picture. I'm in love with music. I make music all the time. I am getting a studio put in soon so that I can just stockpile songs. The songs will just trigger images . . . you can just sit in a chair and play a song and the images just start popping up.

SM: What can we expect in the future?

GA: I just sent my camera in to get the heads cleaned for the first time in 7 years. I have a little money coming in, so I have been writing for the last couple of weeks. I am so happy that the entire first chapter of stuff is coming out this year and it ends with *Chicory*, the last thing I have done. I have a whole new year beginning. I am in an unbelievable creative space. Man, I can't tell you how exciting it has all been . . . it has been my dream for a very long time . . . It's just unbelievable and I just can't wait to keep investigating, you know?

Giueppe's films *Trailertown*, *Touch Me in the Morning*, and *Period Piece* are currently available on DVD from Troma Entertainment. A new collection of Giuseppe's more recent films, titled the *Homeschool Bathrobe Box Set*, as well as Giuseppe's Xmas film, *Chicory and the Diarrhea Nightmare*, are coming soon. See www.troma.com for more details.



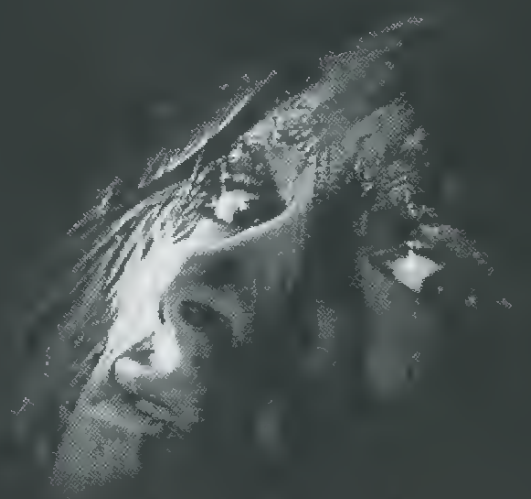
DVD REVIEWS

A FILM BY NEIL MARSHALL

THE DESCENT

Directed by Neil Marshall 2005 Pathe U.K. region 2 DVD - U.S. Lions Gate Films (2006)

2002 gave us British writer/director Neil Marshall's first feature film, *Dog Soldiers*--an adrenaline-packed (not to mention gore-drenched) military/werewolf/siege thriller. While it didn't feature an all-male lead cast, nobody ever came close to mistaking it for a "chick flick" (if Webster's accepts it into the dictionary, do you have to put quotation marks around it anymore?). Therefore, it came as something of a surprise when Marshall's follow-up feature *The Descent*, monster movie though it was, centered around six female protagonists on a therapeutic bonding excursion. However, this in itself isn't likely to put off interested viewers in the U.S.—what may very well work against it is the recent release of a certain PG-13 dud known as *The Cave*, with which *The Descent* shares a (very) superficial similarity. Lions Gate Entertainment plans to release *The Descent* in American theatres in the summer of 2006--in the meantime, the British import DVD is already available.



As *The Descent* opens, we are introduced to lead character Sarah (Shauna Macdonald) as she enjoys a white-water adventure with her husband Paul (Oliver Milburn), her daughter Jessica (Molly Kayll) and her friends. The excursion itself goes without a hitch, but the trip home is shattered by a ghastly vehicle accident (remember *Night Warning* or Lamberto Bava's *Macabre*? You'll get the idea). A year later, Sarah is alone in the world, save for her five best gal-pals: Juno (Natalie Mendoza), Beth (Alex Reid), Rebecca (Saskia Mulder), Sam (MyAnna Buring) and Holly (Nora-Jane Noone)—who resolve to restore Sarah's spirit with a new adventure—a spelunking expedition in the Appalachians. However, the philosophy "it's no good unless there's some risk involved," is taken a bit too seriously, and the explorers find themselves in completely unfamiliar territory, when a cave-in renders a return from whence they came quite impossible. Marshall could have given us an excellent survival thriller with this premise alone . . . but then come the Crawlers. Whether or not they were once human doesn't matter—what counts is that these blind albino creatures have grown quite adept at tracking sustenance by sound—with their teeth and claws providing all they need to claim it.

Once again, Marshall could have abandoned character, shifted gears and given us an excruciating, bloody shocker—and gotten away with it. But *The Descent* continues to take full advantage of its unusual (for a camp-free survival/horror film) female perspective throughout. The film's one male character may have been decisively eliminated in the early going, but remnants of male presence continue to have a telling effect on the women—be they as simple as a gift watch that sets off a shrill beep at an inopportune moment; or as complicated as a memento which changes the very nature of one of the strongest bonds to be found here. This is not to confuse "feminine" with "feminist"—the women make their own choices and must be held accountable for their own actions—but Sarah's loss of identity as a wife and mother still sets her apart from her peers and takes *The Descent* in directions that "guy pictures" tend not to follow. (This is most strongly realized at the end of the film—however, rumor has it that Lions Gate plans to substitute the original ending—as seen on the import disc—with something less challenging, the better to supposedly please U.S. "mainstream" audiences—if so, no doubt we'll be talking about this a lot more, but the less said for now, the better.)

Few viewers will take this into account while the film is in progress, however. *The Descent* scores equally well as a purely visceral nightmare. Forget the poorly-glimpsed *Cave* creatures—the Crawlers are among the most frightening (and believable) subterranean menaces yet committed to film. And while spoilers are best avoided, rest assured that the havoc they wreak is as gory and cringe-inducing as anything found in most contemporary male-dominated horror outings (while *The Descent* may be far more interesting to female viewers than other current genre releases, those who flinch easily will find this every bit as hard to take). Neil Marshall has succeeded in giving us something fresh without relaxing his hold on the tried and true. *The Descent* (at least in the version reviewed here), therefore, comes highly recommended.

Shane M. Dallmann

VICE SQUAD

Directed by Gary Sherman
(1982) Anchor Bay DVD

After one of her fellow hookers is horribly murdered, nice, but tough prostitute Season Hubley, decides to help hard-bitten Los Angeles vice detective Gary Swanson and his crack squad of streetwise cops--antsy Hispanic Pepe Serna among them—apprehend the killer. He's a slimy, sadistic, wire-hanger wielding pimp named Ramrod. Wings Hauser plays the eminently abhorrent, savage, and sickeningly cocky Ramod. He gives a tour-de-force performance, that deservedly caused his' B-pic career to really take off throughout the 80's, and continue until the mid-90's. Whether he's threatening to set a bag lady on fire with a cigarette lighter, or attempting to sample Hubley's lovely wares ("You're such a wild thing," he lasciviously coos while unbuttoning her shirt), Hauser's repellent characterization remains a hellishly enthralling marvel from start to finish.

Director Gary Sherman (*Raw Meat*, *Dead and Buried*) keeps a firm, reign on the scuzzy narrative throughout, staging the action scenes with grungy flair to spare (the ending is especially potent and vicious). He effectively develops a tangibly sordid, gritty and unglamorous nighttime big city environment, populated by sharp-tongued prostitutes, ferociously possessive pimps, and kinky Johns of every conceivable stripe. This grimy feature serves as a key transitional work whereby the harshly realistic grindhouse movies of the 70's eventually gave way to more violent and over-the-top nasty 80's exploitation trash. Just pay attention to the very beginning and conclusion of this movie to discern what I'm saying. The opening credits sequence with the hookers hitting the streets, and the flashing police cars plays like a generic 70's cop show, while the preposterous climactic confrontation between Swanson and Hauser wouldn't be out of place in an 80's big budget blockbuster action fest. More revealing still is the very mannish and muscular Hubley, who is quite adamant about keeping her independence, which is precisely why macho control freak Hauser is so intent on killing her. What we have here is a serious power game, with a hyper-masculine brute lording it over women to such a severe degree that he'll kill any lady who dares to step out of line. In essence, Wings Hauser's Ramrod is a true villain of the dog-eat-dog, every-man-for-himself type, while Hubley represents a compromised version of feminism, where the only way to make it in a male-dominated world is by being really butch and aggressive.

Hubley is commendably sassy and appealingly ragged as our fiercely self-reliant heroine (She previously portrayed a hooker in Paul Schrader's *Hardcore* and went on to play another streetwalker in the dreadful *Prettykill*). Swanson offers strong support, both original pioneering MTV VJ Nina Blackwood and 70's drive-in film goddess Cheryl "Rainbeaux" Smith, pop up briefly as ladies of the evening. Roger Corman movie favorite Jonathan Haze has a funny bit as a freak trick who wants to urinate on Hubley. *Vice Squad* is worth seeing just to hear Wings Hauser wail out the terrifically hard-thrashin' Simon Stokes-penned theme song "Neon Slime"! Anchor Bay works their usual magic with a first-rate DVD, offering a sumptuous widescreen presentation along with an in-your-face trailer. Extras include two fantastic radio spots, and a poster and still gallery. There's an eye-opening commentary track from director Gary Sherman that's expertly moderated by the always reliable David Gregory.

Joe Wawrzyniak

BAD GUY

Directed by Ki-duk Kim
(2004) Tartan U.K. DVD (region 2 import)

Aimlessly wandering about the vicinity of a high traffic shopping mall, Han-ki (Jae-hyeon Jo) gazes upon the angelic beauty of Sun-hwa (Won Seo) sitting on a bench with her textbooks in hand. Her admirer's appearance is as intimidating as his penetrating stare, grungy clothing, an ugly scar spanning the width of his throat, and a rugged criminal aura about him totally alien to her collegiate life. Her boyfriend finally arrives just before Han-ki works up the audacity to force a kiss upon her, much to everyone's disgust. Refusing to apologize for his behavior, an angry mob of bystanders give him a severe beating. Han-ki exacts revenge for his public disgrace, orchestrating a diabolical trap in which Sun-hwa finds herself in unfathomable long term debt. She is gradually transplanted to the red light district of Seoul, where she must live in a brothel and work as a prostitute. Han-ki silently watches Sun-hwa ply her trade behind a two way mirror, protecting her from the likes of unruly customers and prominent underworld figures.

Bad Guy is a thoroughly complex and challenging piece of artistry from director Ki-duk Kim (*Samaritan Girl*, *The Isle*). Rarely are characters of such depth brought to life upon the screen. Han-ki alternates between being despicable, sympathetic, lethal, and sensitive. A mysterious enigma who very rarely speaks, he is an internalized brooding figure with volumes of background story that are never spoon fed to the viewer. Jae-hyeon Jo excels in the role with highly expressive body language that carries such heavy baggage. A maelstrom of emotional suffering. Han-ki is not the traditional kind of pimp generally shown in movies. He serves in more of an underboss capacity in charge of new recruits, and along with his younger brother Myoung-soo (Duek-mun Choi) and associate Jeong-tae (Yun-tae Kim), he must provide security for all of the girls. Han-ki can be redeeming at times, such as when Sun-hwa is understandably traumatized by her first patron. In a merciful act, he quickly removes her customer, and tries to make her initiation less painful. Han-ki is presented as a truly pitiable being in the only scene where we hear him speak. His frail voice is the result of damaged vocal cords from a near fatal encounter. It's hard not to feel something for him in this vulnerable moment. Sun-hwa is every bit as complex as her employer. Coming from such a different world as Han-ki, at the outset of the story, she is a bubbly twenty one year old college student naive to the world outside of school books and lecture halls. To watch her transformation into a working prostitute is heartbreaking. Won Seo exudes corrupted innocence in such a believable manner. The feelings she eventually develops for Han-ki are difficult to accept, yet their later scenes together convey an undeniable chemistry. None of the characters in *Bad Guy* are black and white. Nearly everyone operates in that gray area zone of morals and motivations.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

BAD GUY

(continued from previous page)

Contrast is the most prominent motif in *Bad Guy*. Sun-hwa and Han-ki are polar opposites in society. She is clearly out of his league from the start, as their union never could have happened under ordinary circumstances. Sun-hwa comes from a pretty conservative life and sports the latest hip fashions. Han-ki can never conceal his criminal status. When he leaves the familiar cathouse neighborhood, he sticks out like a repugnant leper when strolling through the downtown financial district of Seoul. The cinematography also contrasts the differences in moods and locations. Sun-hwa's relationship with her boyfriend is filmed with a pure look of serenity. The red light district is illuminated by vibrant neon lights that underscore the superficial attraction supposedly respectable men are drawn to there. A grainy style of photography is scattered throughout, lending itself to the often melancholic tone of the story. Another primary theme in *Bad Guy* is environments and the roles they play in shaping one's destiny. Han-ki was raised in and around whorehouses and the lifestyle is clearly in his blood. Many times he cannot express himself as normal individuals would, instead he explodes in fits of violence. Sun-hwa is at first revolted by her new surroundings. After she momentarily escapes, it's extremely depressing to see her paying for a ride with her body. Ki-duk Kim's literary screenplay shows the irreparable damage caused by such a seedy environment and how she will never escape her doomed fate.

Unlike the majority of features produced today, *Bad Guy* is steeped in realism and stripped of any glamour. It translates to uneasy viewing for the average film connoisseur. One such example of insistence on realism is discussed in the brief interview with actor Duek-mun Choi during which he reveals how his character Myoung-soo was in fact beaten up twice just to assure his bruises would appear authentic. The brilliant imagery of the photographs with the torn out faces enables Ki-duk Kim to veer off into more surreal terrain. This clever framing device pushes the story towards a rather ambiguous though downbeat ending. On the surface, *Bad Guy* seems to be just another misogynistic tale of cruelty. Actually there is so much more to be discovered in this thought provoking work of profound depth. *Bad Guy* is the kind of film that gets under your skin and haunts you, leaving so much to ponder after the end credits roll.

Adam Bialek

VISIT OUR NEWLY DESIGNED WEBSITE AT
www.somethingweird.com

AND INVADING HOMES ACROSS AMERICA...

SOMETHING WEIRD
ON DEMAND

AVAILABLE ON Comcast

www.selectondemand.com

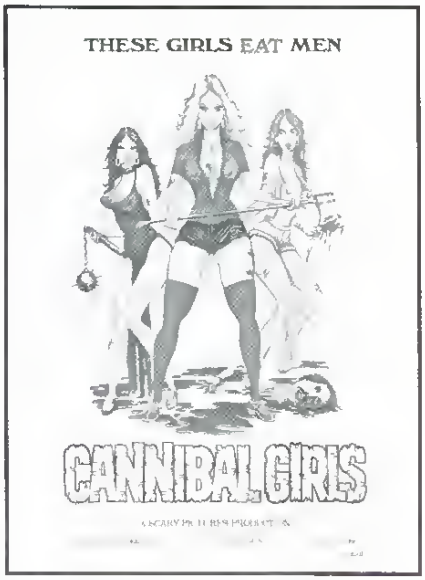
SEND $5 FOR A DVD & VHS CATALOG TO
SOMETHING WEIRD VIDEO - POB 33664 - SEATTLE WA 98133
425-290-5830 AND TOLL FREE 888-634-3320

CANNIBAL GIRLS

Directed by Ivan Reitman

A.I.P. (1973)

Here's an early Ivan (*Ghostbusters*) Reitman film which stars SCTV stalwarts Eugene Levy and Andrea Martin! They have the lead roles in this exceedingly mild Canadian horror comedy, that for good reason has evaded official video or DVD release. Levy and Martin play a newlywed hippie couple who land in the snowbound town of Farnhamville, "the friendly city" for a honeymoon. A motel proprietor tells them of the local legend of three strange girls who led unsuspecting males to their isolated farmhouse for food and sex prior to killing them for a cannibal feast. Their interest piqued, they visit the renovated farmhouse which has since become a hotel presided over by the ingratiatingly pompous Reverend Alex St. John (Ronald Ulrich). In predictable fashion, the couple learns that the surrounding townspeople are conspiring for a repeat "feast of flesh."

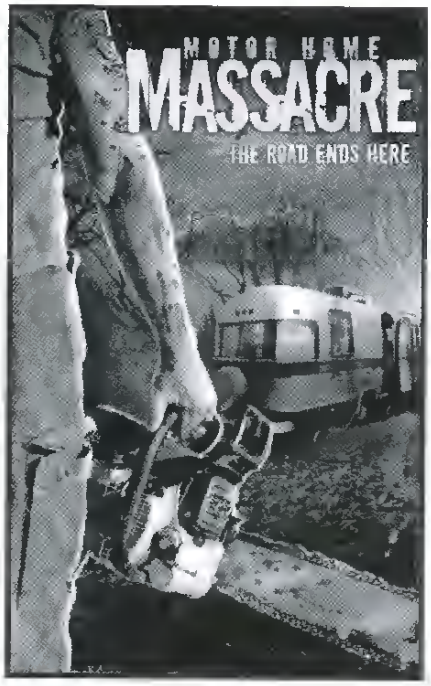


Cannibal Girls commits the unpardonable sin of not living up to its outrageous title. There is very little blood, very mild sex and even fewer laughs set against its bleak, wintry backdrop. A title that reads, "The dialogue was developed by the cast from an original story by . . . " is probably Canadian for one-take improv. The one bright spot is provided by the 26-year-old Martin, whose ditzy flower child character steals the show.

Cannibal Girls' trailer has since landed on many compilations, and became notorious for the come-on line "In order not to offend or horrify those in the audience of a squeamish or prudish disposition . . . the sound of a bell in the theater will warn you when to close your eyes or turn away so that you may avoid witnessing certain scenes of an especially erotic . . . Or gruesome nature." One's sympathies goes out to the unfortunate candy counter girl pressed into "horror horn" duty, whose job was to alert audiences to this turkey's paltry exploitable elements.

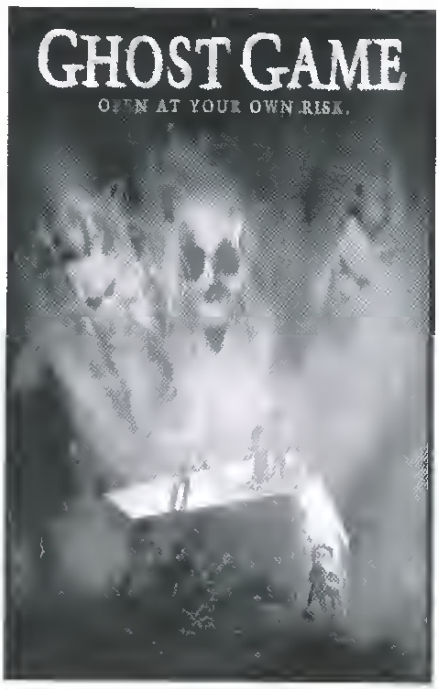
Greg Goodsell

(Editor's note: Although an official DVD for Cannibal Girls *does not exist, we were able to find a DVD-R of the film from Unearthly Video. The film was distributed in the U.S. by American International Pictures).*



MOTOR HOME MASSACRE
Directed by Allen Wilbanks
Lions Gate Films (2005)

Motor Home Massacre is nothing more than another teen slasher movie that owes homage to Sean Cunningham's *Friday the 13th*. We've seen it all before. Adolescent couples who look like flunkies from an audition for an upcoming WB series go on a camping trip since they have nothing better to do. Sure enough, their destination is Black Creek, the scene of two horrendous murders committed by a mysterious killer. Unlike most films of this ilk, the slayings happened the previous night, so the madman is still on the loose. When the young bunch arrive at the grounds, the local inbred cop tells them that they have to stay on the site because it is a crime scene, and no one can leave once they enter. The film then becomes stereotypical of every other killer-at-camp film. Lots of gore, a flash or two of breasts, and teens dying off one by one. Sadly, *Motor Home Massacre* isn't sure if it's a horror flick or a comedy. The one thing I can say for certain, is that this production is a bore-fest of the worst kind. Why Lion's Gate would even consider putting this on the market is an insult. Here's a typical line from the film—The victim says "You're not making any sense!", and the killer replies "I don't have to, I'm the one with the machete." This is the debut offering from writer/director Allen Willbanks. I'll give him credit, his film is for sale thanks to Lion's Gate's distribution. As soon as I finish this review, I'll give their PR department a call and ask them if they'd be interested in buying a bridge in Brooklyn that I have for sale.



GHOST GAME
Directed by Joe Knee
Image Entertainment (2004)

After finishing *Motor Home Massacre* , I thought that *Ghost Game* could only be a step up. So much for hoping that I could watch a film with somewhat of an original idea. I knew it was going to be a long evening when the first part of dialogue I hear is "Going camping!" I kid you not. Unlike *MHM*, *Ghost Game*'s cast are slightly older, but not much brighter. When the campers arrive at their cabin, they discover a metal box. They unlock it, and the directions clearly read DON'T PLAY THIS GAME. Do they heed the warning? Of course not! What we are treated to next, is a weak plot about three witches who were killed on the site thirty years ago (the trio looks like a poor man's Bananarama). They take out their revenge on the dudes and dudettes (seven in total, one named Cousin Ted). The only way the victims can get out of the witches curse, is to defeat them at their own game. By the end of picture, I couldn't care who lived or died. Alas, what we have here is a yawner of a film. I have nothing against direct to DVD productions, but *Ghost Game* is difficult to sit through. Even the cheesy factor is lame. The gore is kept to a minimum, there's no nudity, and the poorly written story did little to keep my attention. Director Joe Knee is best known for other indie pics such as the upcoming *Cult* as well as *Knock, Knock Who's There*, and *The Last Leaf*. Most of us can appreciate a bad movie if it has something that makes it charming. *Ghost Game* shows no sign of any life—or any afterlife for that matter.

WHAT? (a.k.a. CHE?)
Directed by Roman Polanski
Alfa Digital DVD (1973)

Academy Award-winning film director Roman Polanski has admitted that after the death of his wife, actress Sharon Tate, at the hands of The Charles Manson "Family" in 1969, few subjects attracted his interest. He completed his dark translation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in 1971, and although the film received critical acclaim, it failed at the box office and never realized a profit. It did, unfortunately, cast a negative light on Polanski as being an arrogant, demanding director with no regards for budget whatsoever! And it was this unfair assessment that drove him to seek out another project.

It was at this time that French producer Jean-Pierre Rassam invited Polanski and producer Andy Braunsberg to Paris. Roman accepted the invitation, and then embarked on writing a screenplay, collaborating with his longtime associate writer Gerard Brach in the Swiss Alps. Actor Jack Nicholson, who frequently visited Polanski during this period, was to have a part in the new picture. The story was about a somewhat kinky, powerful film producer and his "auditioning" of young actresses. Nicholson opted out, and Rassam, who actually like the story, mentioned it to Italian producer Carlo Ponti (Sophia Loren's husband) who invited Polanski, Brach, and Rassam to Rome to discuss a co-production.

Ponti suggested using the Italian Riviera as the setting for this new script and the re-write became what we now know as *Che?* or *What?*—truly a film of its age. Instead of the producer and the actress, we see a story of a millionaire and an innocent, beautiful, young hippie girl, whose character was modeled after an actual acquaintance of Polanski's. Upon completion of the script, Rassam discovered his funding to be non-existent, so Ponti alone assumed the $1.2 million burden of production costs. Ponti also provided one of his villas near Naples to be used as the main set, and soon production was underway. First cast were Marcello Mastroianni (of *La Dolce Vita* fame) and Hugh Griffith (*Ben Hur*). Next came Sydne Rome, an American actress working in Italy. By the way, Synde's sister, Lisa, would later become a "special" girlfriend to Roman Polanski during his sexual rape trial in Los Angeles in 1977. Rounding out the cast was our director and writer, Polanski himself. *Che?* became Polanski's first film ever completed ahead of schedule and became a major success in Italy. It didn't do that well in other European countries, and failed miserably in the United States. Polanski decided to settle in Rome and stayed there until Jack Nicholson and Bob Evans (a Hollywood movie mogul and Paramount Pictures vice-president) persuaded him to come to Hollywood to participate in *Chinatown*. The rest is another story.

As far as *Che?* goes, it was released in 1973 and was referred to as an "offbeat rendition of 'Alice in Wonderland'! It was released in two formats—the original release as well as an edited "R"-rated version with a title of *Diary of Forbidden Dreams* at a running time of 94 minutes. The version seen by this reviewer is the original, unedited print, and the DVD contains bonuses of the original Italian trailer, a slideshow, and a 54-minute informative interview with Polanski.

What? A.k.a Che?

Continued from page 45

Set on the Italian Riviera, *Che?* has a bit of a convoluted plot. Most of the action occurs at a millionaire's home where strangely unique happenings drive the audience to the edge! *Che?* begins with a comical (if the word may be used with respect to this subject matter) botched rape scene involving our heroine, Nancy, played by Sydne Rome. She escapes, but only to be attacked by a large dog (who seems to try the same!). She whacks him with her ever-present diary and he retreats—with the book! Nancy is shown to a bedroom where she tries to explain her plight to an elderly woman making the bed. The woman, like the man who escorted Nancy to the room, has no concept of her story and proceeds to spray the room with shaving cream, believing it to be room deodorizer. She finally goes to bed, but first discovers a hole in the wall which "swallows" the pen she uses to plug it up. The next morning, the pen has reappeared. Nancy (who appears topless through quite a bit of the film—and sometimes bottomless as well!) explores her surroundings and discovers nudity is quite acceptable. She serves coffee to Alex (Mastroianni) and is complemented on her breasts. Afterwards, two Ping-Pong players try to discourage her from meeting him later. She does, of course, meet him later, but first dines with the Ping-Pong players, meets Mosquito (Polanski)—a strange, nymph-like character—and encounters a priest floating on the tides! When she does meet Alex, he dons a tiger skin and commands her to "tame' him. Later, Nancy records the day's events in her diary as two travelers arrive—a couple from America—hoping they have "the same room as before." She retreats to the beach with her borrowed alarm clock to sleep on a raft.

When Nancy awakens and finds her pants missing, she searches for Mosquito. In the house, she falls asleep in a "hand"-shaped seat, and, again, awakens to find a strange man performing oral sex on her! She is furious, and he adds to her ire by accusing HER of behaving badly! The situation is diffused when he begins to play the piano, and they perform a Mozart duet. Nancy then continues on her search for Mosquito, whom she fears may harpoon Alex. One of the painters in the tower where she searches sees her left leg as colorless, and paints it a beautiful sky blue color! It's of course morning now, and she finds Alex in his favorite lounge chair on the patio. We do the whole scene over again with the Ping-Pong ball crushing, and the "let's get together" routine, etc. She again encounters the priest, only this time in the hallway of the villa. He offers to hear her confession, but she relays her concern that strange things are happening—not once, but twice! He tells her to follow her conscience, and leaves. She heads to the patio dining area, where an old man, Mr. Nobler, is brought to the table in a wheelchair. He inquires to the identity of the young lady and has an attack of some sort. We next see Nancy and Alex in a paddleboat, then on the beach digging up a policeman's uniform. He dons the outfit, interrogates her, then proceeds to slap and whip her!

Now back to the villa, where the others are all reading Nancy's diary. Another piano duet. An art deal gone bad. A walkie-talkie invitation to Mr. Nobler's bedroom. Nancy performs a little show for him and he dies! She runs with the others in pursuit and loses her shirt to the dog! She manages to hitch a ride on a cargo truck, talks about the movie they're in with Alex, and that's THE END!

Well . . . what can I say? This film is an exercise in comic futility. There is virtually no plot, little continuity, and lots of visual stimulation. Even though I consider myself a dedicated Polanski fan, *Che?* is not one of his better films. However, given the era in which it was made, where it was made, and why it was made, I guess it "fits the bill." Unfortunately, my fellow audience members may find themselves asking one thing at film's end—and that is simply . . . *WHAT?*

Ed Santo

THE GARDENER

Directed by Jim Kay
(1975) Subversive Cinema DVD

Surrounded by the omnipresent green landscapes of Puerto Rico, displaced wife Ellen Bennett (Katharine Houghton) is as bored as she is wealthy. Her days are mostly spent soaking up the sun with her friend Helena (Rita Gam), sharing the usual gossip over cocktails. Ellen becomes rather enamored of the landscaping magic of local gardener Carl (Joe Dallesandro), currently in need of employment. She convinces her workaholic husband John (James Congdon) to hire him. Carl surpasses their expectations as he cultivates a lush garden of vibrant colors that is sure to boost the property value of the estate. The housekeeping staff does not share in such admiration, rather they are quietly discussing superstitious fears about the new gardener. Ellen begins to develop her own paranoid theories which opens the door for some amateur sleuthing. As Carl's job history is pieced together via tragic freak occurrences linking former employers, it becomes increasingly apparent he is more than just a skilled horticulturist.

With the intent of releasing a commercially viable picture, *The Gardener* was renamed the more genre friendly *Seeds of Evil*. The new title conjures up wild imagery of man eating plants or some ugly strain of botanical terror. Writer and director Jim Kay keeps the horror elements much more subdued. Instead he attempted to update a mythological tale in a modern setting. In this case, it is the abduction of Persephone, the Greek Goddess of Spring by Hades. Aside from the costume party scene, the realization of this myth becomes convoluted. It's surprising for a movie brimming with such sexual tension that we never see any actual sex. The story could very easily have digressed into a softcore flick. By distancing itself from both monster and erotic cinema, *The Gardener* never consummates the storytelling possibilities available. The only horrific moment does not arrive until the finale. Carl's transformation cements the preceding events in supernatural certainty. The stop motion dissolves used for his metamorphosis display some cool and imaginative special effects on a meager budget, yet appearing no more muddled than current CGI fueled blockbusters littering the big screen like last year's *Fantastic Four*.

Katharine Houghton (real life niece of the legendary Katharine Hepburn) turns in a respectable performance as Ellen. Alternating between noble, delusional, and oftentimes bipolar, her character is given the most depth. Rita Gam has the more straightforward role as Helena, yet her bonds of friendship with Ellen always feel genuine. Helena is the obligatory voice of reason. Joe Dallesandro was a clever casting choice for the title role. Looking like a cross between a modern day Don Juan from a romance novel and the frontman of a retro rock band, his screen presence is undeniable. Apparently Joe was making a conscious effort to shed his Warhol image, as this was one of the very first acting gigs following his Factory stint. *The Gardener* contradicts such hopes as Carl always appears shirtless sporting hip huggers that would make any image minded 70's glam rocker jealous. A couple commando scenes are even thrown in for good measure. Carl has anemic dialogue compared to the rest of the cast, saddled with interminable stretches of silence and hashish inspired body language. Carl gives new meaning to the term mystery man, yet too little of his background is brought to light. Midway through the picture, Jinny (Cass Fry) the perky young niece of Ellen, pays a visit only to abruptly disappear after first meeting Carl. This plot point is frustratingly never addressed. Joe Dallesandro was better utilized in the cult horror flicks *Flesh for Frankenstein* and *Blood for Dracula*. More recently Joe was a quirky albeit intimidating hit-man working for Peter Fonda in *The Limey*.

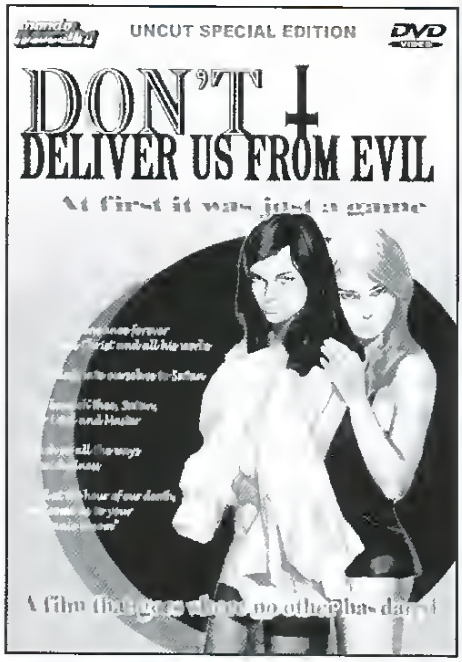
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Subversive Cinema continues to serve the most satisfying menu of extras for cult movie collectors. Two separate commentaries are present, one with Jim Kay, and a separate track with Joe Dallesandro. There is also a short film by the producer Chalmer Kirkbridge Jr entitled "Million Dollar Dream," initially used for his master's thesis in 1980 coupled with "Planting the Seeds of Evil," a brand new 35 minute featurette with Kay, Houghton, and Dallesandro. The interviews are top notch as all three reminisce with mostly fond memories. None of them pull any punches however with regard to the film's dismal reception, and are very candid with their personal feelings. Despite its shortcomings, *The Gardener* has been beautifully reincarnated with this masterfully produced dvd edition. Joe Dallesandro completists will especially find something of value within.

Adam Bialek

DON'T DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Directed by Joel Seria
(1971) Mondo Macabro DVD



Nearing the end of another academic year, best friends Anne (Jeanne Goupil) and Lore (Catherine Wagener) are enrolled in a Catholic boarding school that preaches fire and brimstone morality. Far from the model students their parents perceive them to be, they revel in the escapism discovered in various smut and sacrilegious novels. Both girls frolic about spying on nuns secretly having a lesbian affair, misuse of communion hosts, fabricated lurid confessions with aroused priests, and fantasies of the pastor showing his true colors during a long winded sermon. The more cunning Anne has become fanatically obsessed with Satanism and her classmate is ever willing to go along for the ride. Once summer break arrives, Anne's parents embark on a two month vacation, with only the pushover groundskeeper Gustave (Rene Berthier) around for some chaperone duties. Lore's folks are an even more unaware couple, completely ignorant of their daughter's lifestyle. A late night black mass in an unused chapel in which they pledge complete allegiance to Satan and renounce all that is holy, proves Anne and Lore aren't caught up in mere teenage rebellion. What started as random mischief elevates to premeditated wrongdoings such as public mockery of the Stations of the Cross, blatant animal cruelty, repeated sexual taunting sure to incite rape, and rural arson for the sake of amusement. One thing remains abundantly clear throughout, neither girl seeks salvation.

Taking aim at religion is probably the most audacious project for a film production, as you can't find a more sensitive subject matter. Joel Seria risked being blacklisted from the outset as *Don't Deliver Us from Evil* was his directorial debut. The screenplay is a loose retelling of the Parker Hammond murder case, the basis for Peter Jackson's more conservative *Heavenly Creatures*. Seria's direction is meticulous with photogenic French countryside shooting locations, a sharp eye for dark brooding atmosphere, and the ability to extract such spellbinding performances from the two young leads. Being able to maintain an even balance between crafting an exploitation movie and arthouse film is perhaps the highest compliment to his directing panache. Hypocrisy of the Catholic church has been tackled in everything from *School of the Holy Beast* to *Killer Nun* and numerous others, but *Don't Deliver Us from Evil* courageously boasts the most comprehensive disregard for societal taboos. Seria wisely chose to end the picture on an extremely bleak tone that would never sit well with a Hollywood producer. This powerhouse climax will likely haunt your consciousness for years to come. Also noteworthy is the musical score by Claude Germain and Dominique Ney, which often sounds like church hymns given an eerie facelift.

Jeanne Goupil and Catherine Wagener each came to the production with minimal acting experience, delivering unpretentious characterizations that never diminish in terms of credibility. Anne is the more dominant of the two, wielding a dangerous influence over Lore, and is able to manipulate virtually everyone. Lore never questions Anne's machinations and poses just as much of threat as she is entirely devoid of any conscience. What provoked almost as much controversy as the religious targets in the film is the image Anne and Lore project onscreen. Even though the actresses were past eighteen at the time of filming, both appear several years younger, making the scenes of them in various stages of undress rather alarming. Goupil and Wagener do more than portray come hither Lolitas. Both are calculating vixens that have nothing but wicked intentions for those around them. Possibly the most challenging scenes to watch concern Anne's family gardener. It's saddening to watch Anne and Lore taking advantage of a sweet natured mildly retarded man and humiliating him repeatedly with sheer delight.

When you consider just how controversial the topic of religion will always be, it's not really surprising how well *Don't Deliver Us from Evil* holds up thirty-five years later. Predictably banned in its original run, Mondo Macabro unleash this film fully uncut on DVD for the first time ever. Separate Q & A's with Joel Seria and Jeanne Goupil shed some fresh new insights along with an informative look at the facts in the Parker Hammond murder case. Mondo Macabro is absolutely peerless when it comes to providing definitive editions of cult obscurities from around the world. In a time when the religious right are hell-bent on global domination, a film like *Don't Deliver Us from Evil* is ripe for discovery.

Adam Bialek

WWW.
CHILLERTHEATRE
.COM

MADMAN
a.k.a. THE LEGEND LIVES
& MADMAN MARZ

Directed by Joe Giannone
(1982) Anchor Bay DVD

The major box office success of *Friday the 13th* naturally spawned an inevitable handful of opportunistic summer camp slaughter-fest rip-offs. What's interesting about this rash of blatant carbon copies is that three of them; *The Burning*, *Madman* and *Sleepaway Camp*, were made in upstate New York. (For those who just got to know, the first *Friday the 13th* pic was actually shot at a summer camp called No-Be-Bo-Sco in Blairstown, New Jersey.) Of the above cited trio, *Madman* rates as my favorite. It was shot at The Fish Cove Inn in Southampton, Long Island and was inspired by a popular local folkloric New York summer camp legend known as the Kropsy Maniac. He was the creepy Catskill Mountains boogeyman figure who was more explicitly dealt with in the pleasingly nihilistic *The Burning*.

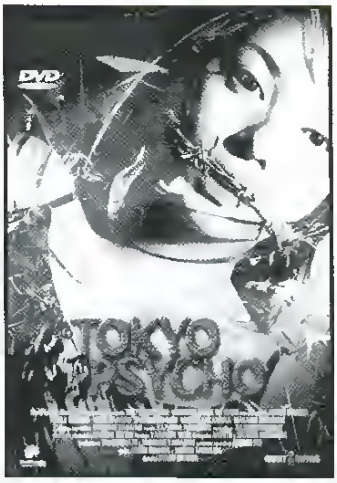
Sure, the thoroughly hackneyed and derivative story of *Madman* is nothing special. A camp counselor tells the frightening tale of Madman Marz, a mean-as-they-come hometown psycho, who was strung up by a lynch mob after he brutally butchered his family. The legend goes that if anyone says ol' Marz's name out loud, the vicious backwoods loon will commence on another horrific killing binge. Of course, some smart-ass punk does exactly that, so our burly, grunting, scraggly-haired, overalls-wearing, axe-swinging, none too friendly villain proceeds to decimate the cast in the expected assorted deliciously splatterific ways. Trite and shopworn the premise may very well be, but *Madman* still delivers the ultra-gory goods just the same. A dude has his neck snapped while dangling from a rope (an exciting set piece). Another schnook gets beheaded. A chick has an axe planted square in her chest (a real juicy snuffing, this one). And in the flick's undeniable highlight, a hapless bimbo winds up being decapitated by a pick-up truck hood! The gal's severed noggin later gets turned into grisly ground round by the pick-up's fan belt!

Mouth-wateringly gruesome murder sequences aside, *Madman* further benefits from a surprisingly sizable serving of tension, the well-developed characters are more engaging than usual (*Dawn of the Dead*'s comely Gaylen Ross is particularly appealing as the spunky heroine). James Momel's divinely crisp and eerie nighttime photography is exceptional (such as the strikingly composed image of Marz's spooky shadowy form watching the counselors high atop a tree, is genuinely alarming). *Madman* also gives us an unintentionally hilarious hot tub sex scene (a sappy love song is heard in the background as the camera frantically swirls about, we see a young couple getting busy), and a first-rate folk theme song that plays over the end credits, which recapitulates Madman Marz's ghastly exploits complete with accompanying hideous visuals! Now, that's an especially nice final touch. And let's not forget our morality lesson—some urban legends are definitely grounded in genuine fact, so they ought to be treated with due respect because of their grim authenticity. Anchor Bay re-issued this beauty on DVD a short while back and did their customary stellar job on it. The disc boasts a mostly sound letterboxed transfer off a somewhat beat-up, but still pretty up to snuff print, plus there's the nifty original theatrical trailer, five terrific TV spots, and an extremely fun and informative commentary supplied by writer/director Joe Giannone, co-writer/producer Gary Sales, and cast members Tony Fish and Paul Ehlers (the latter played nutty ol' Marz himself). Beware the Madman Marz!

Joe Wawrzyniak

TOKYO PSYCHO

Directed by Ataru Oikawa
(2004) Panik House DVD



Kindly twenty-something Yumiko (Sachiko Kokubu) has been investing all her energies into a graphic design company she operates along with her best friend Moe (Mizuho Nakamura). Yumiko is not in search of Mr. Right, as she is more concerned at present with pressing entrepreneurial responsibilities. Her rather routine life is disrupted to say the very least upon receipt of a blood adorned manuscript fastened with piano wire declaring that she was born to marry the unknown writer of the letter. Moe is too starry-eyed to fathom her dear friend's plight, as she has just accepted her boyfriend's surprise marriage proposal. As Yumiko continues to receive further threats, she pieces everything together and discovers a disturbed individual from her past is responsible. This precipitates a string of grisly murders culminating in Yumiko face to face with her crazed admirer (Masashi Taniguchi), a pawn in his twisted games.

The clever limited edition jigsaw puzzle cover by Panik House is quite an attention getter. While surely a stroke of marketing genius, it's somewhat misleading. The cover art along with the menu screens would have you prepared for an all out bloodbath. Director and screenwriter Ataru Oikawa of the *Tomie* series delivers a reality based picture more concerned about everyday fears which can randomly target anyone and endanger our livelihood. The three aforementioned leads succeed admirably with believable performances and are a refreshing change of pace from the cardboard cutouts too often found in the modern American slasher scene. Yumiko and Moe are equally sympathetic individuals reacting differently in crisis mode. Masashi Taniguchi really chews up the scenery in the title role. Hiding behind a facade of normalcy, he is an unapologetic sadist at heart. The sparse gore is effective when utilized, though the scenes involving worms are probably the most disgusting and unsettling captured in recent films.

Shot on digital video, the low budget of *Tokyo Psycho* is undeniably apparent. As the story progresses, one can overlook the budgetary restraints thanks to stylish cinematography punctuated by inventive camera angles. The moody tracking shots that constantly wind through otherwise mundane apartment complex corridors are imbued with the ever present dread of a stalker waiting to attack. Perhaps the best scene involves Yumiko and her colleague Mika (Yuka Hayashi) playing detectives discovering the lair of the psychopath. The two girls bravely explore an apartment building that resembles a haunted house enshrouded in darkness even in the safety of daylight hours. This atmospheric moment recalls a spooky scene from the 1943 Val Lewton production *The Seventh Victim* in which Kim Hunter and an equally frightened private eye break into an office building which may provide information regarding her missing sister. The music of *Tokyo Psycho* is as unconventional as the photography. The avant-garde electronic score further complements the unfolding madness.

Panik House does not skimp in the special features department. There are two audio commentaries, one is surprisingly in Spanish! A brief yet interesting making of featurette is worth your time revealing tidbits such as how frigid the ocean temperatures were for the tense finale, whereas the excerpts from the premiere are basically filler. Also included is a text essay on the real life serial killers that inspired the story, the Otaku Murderer and Hiroyuki Tsuchida. The latter case inspired Takashi Miike's *Visitor Q*. Ultimately, *Tokyo Psycho* does not reinvent the slasher picture. Instead it shows signs of life in a genre that for the most part continues to flatline.

Adam Bialek

Valerie and her Week of Wonders aka Valerie a týden divu

Directed by Jaromil Jires
(1970) Facets DVD

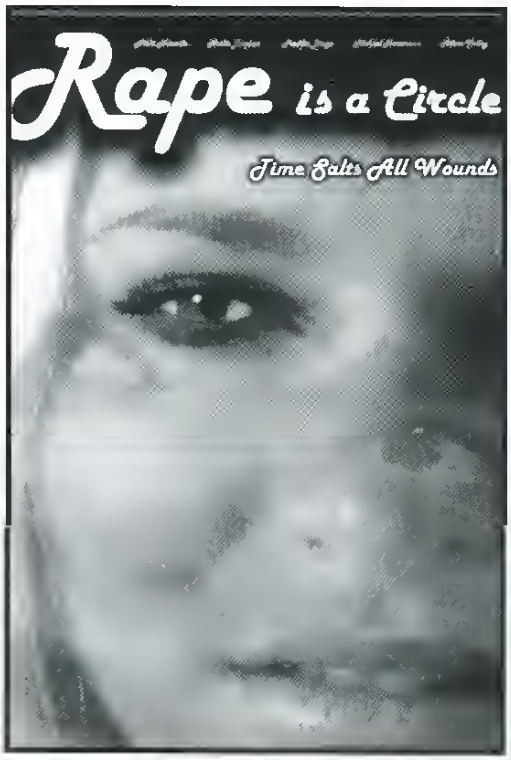
Valerie and her Week of Wonders is an amazing and unique experience, full of bizarre symbolism and cynical allegory, a visually beautiful film to be sure, but one that may raise more questions than it answers. Ostensibly, it is a "coming of age" story about a thirteen year-old beauty, Valerie (Jaroslava Schallerova), who has either extremely traumatic sexual experiences, or wild, wild hallucinations, on the eve of her first menstrual period, and the dawning of her sexual being. Most disturbing is a gruesome figure who stalks Valerie constantly, a vampire-like demon with rotting teeth and a grimy cape who haunts the virgin until she "gives in" sexually to the monster. The visually stunning film unreels like a long-buried dream of childhood; you can see that filmmaker Jaromil Jires borrowed equally from Bergman, Fellini and Pasolini for his main themes and symbolisms, and many of the references work well; others are quite tedious and/or confusing. Heavy-handed allegory tied to a skeletal narrative has to be handled very carefully, and unfortunately, *Valerie* runs out of steam way before the end. It is probably best to view this film as an arty exercise in erotica, for this is where *Valerie* really shines. The film features almost continual nudity, and a lot of sex between almost everyone in the village, including our titular virgin's granny! Our cute-as-pie heroine disrobes for us regularly, exhibiting an incredible body, and soon, she is having sex with her father, her mother, her cousin, her boyfriend, a corrupt priest, and the old vampire figure who may be the Devil or Death, as well as some local bisexual wenches. Whew! This would have certainly earned an "X" rating in its US art house release, and it wouldn't be surprising to find that *Valerie* made the rounds of some high-end sexploitation circuits. The film ends in a pastoral Dionysian orgy, in which post-cherry Valerie is invited into the world of adult sexual activity, and the sexual revolution in Czechoslovakia begins! As *Valerie* has all of the qualities of a typical fairy tale virgin, one is actually reminded of the bizarre Mexican Kiddie Matinee classic, *Little Red Riding Hood and the Monsters* (1965), as our sweet little virgin runs away from her grandmother and enters a world full of beasts, demons and murderous men. Think of *Valerie* as a Kiddy Matinee Gothic fairytale with sex! (Actually, *Alice in Wonderland, Nosferatu, Carrie* and *The Company of Wolves* also come to mind.) Available in a spanking new re-mastered DVD from Facets Media.

Crest and Colgate declined product placement offers in 1970's *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders*.

RAPE IS A CIRCLE

Directed by Bill Zebub
(2006) Grimoire DVD

Two Canadian hitchhikers, Isabelle (Niki Notarile) and Kerri (Yelena Sobolevski), hope that some passing motorist will notice they are seriously underdressed for a New Jersey winter's day. Enter Kat (Natalie Laspina), a strange local whose favorite pastimes include driving around with amateur bondage gear (duct tape and rope) and brooding in the cemetery over her loved one, while kicking back plastic cups of Sangria. Kat takes them home, making a lunch complete with drugged cocktails. At this point our host gets nasty, subjecting her visitors to a slew of assorted debauchery.



Indeed it's difficult to get beyond the director's name, who deserves the bulk of the blame for this slapdash stink bomb. Mr. Zebub chose to paste his name like an epitaph all over the credits. What else should one expect from the director of such tripe as *Jesus Christ Serial Rapist* and *The Worst Horror Movie Ever Made*? Better production values can be found in amateur porn. The props (specifically the knife and gun) look as though they were purchased at Dollar Tree. "Time salts all wounds. Sadness is the only thing in life that never dies." These are just a couple samples of the utterly asinine dialogue bombarding you. The cast does little to remedy the situation with comatose performances for the most part. Natalie Laspina has some fine moments emitting some really over the top x-rated dialogue, which will delight trash film enthusiasts. She's no Sheri Moon Zombie, but make no mistake, Natalie is definitely the highlight of the picture. It's a shame to see Kat in between maniacal outbursts carrying on like a societal misfit in need of friendship. This fails to elicit sympathy from the audience, who would most likely prefer to see her remain a potty mouth tormentor.

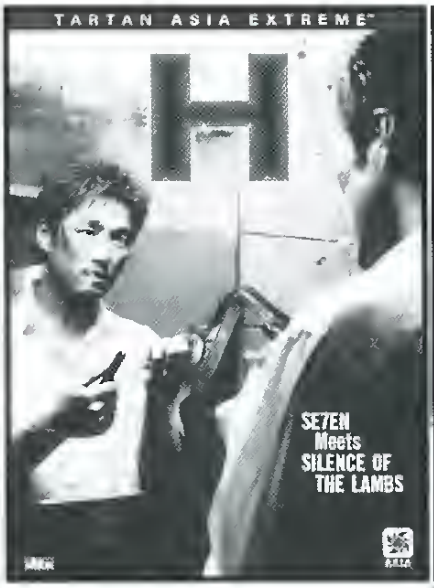
The depiction of torture is very tame in *Rape is a Circle*. Those expecting a T & A parade will find far more lingering shots of naked Barbie dolls than the actresses themselves. Poor video photography that relies on way too many close-ups and a lame goth metal soundtrack are sure to bludgeon you into submission instantaneously, further debunking any attempts at legitimacy. The rape revenge motif has been done to death in mainstream and underground cinema for decades. One need look no further than Wes Craven's 1972 debut *Last House on the Left* for what still remains the most unflinching and disturbing depiction to date. Perhaps the most insanely surreal story of sexual humiliation can be found in Michael and Roberta Findlay's *A Thousand Pleasures*, available from Something Weird Video along with its companion feature *Take Me Naked*.

Adam Bialek

H

Directed by Jong-hyuk Lee
(2002) Tartan DVD

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. An old cliché takes on the darkest meaning as an elusive murderer rampages through South Korea reenacting the carnage of an imprisoned madman. Ten months ago Shin Hyun (Seung-woo Cho) turned himself over to the authorities after embarking on a killing spree that claimed the lives of six women, the common denominator among them being unwanted pregnancies. The copycat killer operates under the same M.O. as his mentor preying upon victims of precise demographics with a meticulous sense of detail. The primary officers assigned to the case are Detectives Kim (Jung-ah Yum), Kang (Jin-hee Ji), and Park (Ji-ru Sung). Kim and Kang pay visits to the shackled Shin Hyun in the hopes that he can provide some much needed insight into the case. Numerous theories abound in the homicide division, including such speculation as Shin Hyun hiring an accomplice to continue his reign of terror.



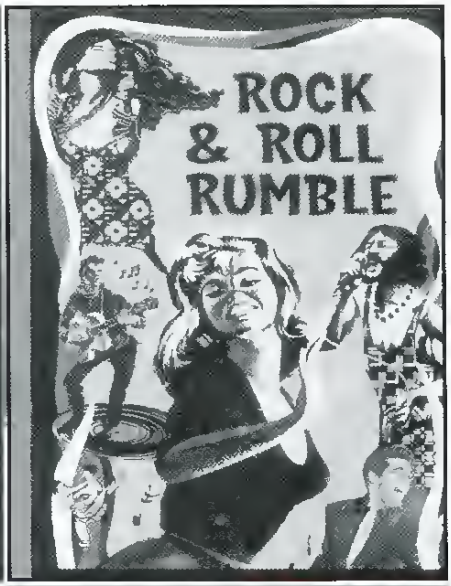
H makes little attempt to hide its cinematic influences. Law enforcement officers interrogating an infamous serial killer in the confines of his prison cell to better understand the mind of a kindred spirit is obviously borrowed from *Silence of the Lambs*. As the story unravels however, we see that Shin Hyun has much more in common actually with the John Doe character portrayed by Kevin Spacey in *Seven*. Both killers felt they were doing God's work through punishing immoral sinners. All of 22 years old with an unassuming boy next door appearance, Cho makes for quite an interesting murderer. He frequently soliloquizes with macabre poetry when discussing violent impulses. Not all of the esoteric rambling necessarily resonates, still Shin Hyun is equally colorful and haunting. The detectives themselves are quite an unlikely trio. Kim comes across as emotionless as an iceberg, the very definition of detachment. She is hiding much beneath the surface however, having the most vested interest in the case. Her fiancé was also a member of the force and was the only officer to apprehend Shin Hyun. He made the unfortunate mistake of releasing him, immediately unleashing six murders. Feeling equally responsible, her fiancé lost his mind and committed suicide. Kim is determined to not let any emotions impair her judgment. She clearly will not rest until everything is resolved. Jung-ah Yum turns in another multi-layered performance as she did playing the stepmother in the masterful *A Tale of Two Sisters*. Impulsive, volatile, and prone to erratic behavior, Detective Kang is the antithesis of Kim. Predictably this leads to several heated clashes between them. Ji-ru Sung seems to be the counterbalance between his two colleagues. Detective Park injects plenty of humor into their rivalry. Another strong female presence can be found in Sun-kyung Kim as the calculating and manipulative Dr. Chu. It's nice to see two women given such roles of substance rather than succumbing to the gender stereotypes usually employed onscreen.

H is the only picture to date from writer and director Jong-hyuk Lee. For a debut outing, his direction is assured yet the pacing at times could fail to satiate the attention span of Western audiences geared towards popcorn flicks. Lee provides rich visuals with the police using their flashing red light sticks in the dead of night as well as the beachfront landscapes depicted in one scene blissfully tranquil, yet later a tidal wave of tension. *H* benefits from quite convincing special effects, namely the corpse props. The autopsy with the unborn child removed from the murdered mother is extremely unpleasant. Most of the actual murders are never shown, but the aftermath (particularly in this case) is uneasy viewing. Lee manages to cram in a number of left hook plot twists with varying degrees of probability in the final quarter of the film. At first glance, *H* may appear to be a copycat film cashing in on past Hollywood blockbusters. When viewed in its entirety and fully digested, it has a style and approach unique in cultural contrast.

ROCK 'N' ROLL RUMBLE

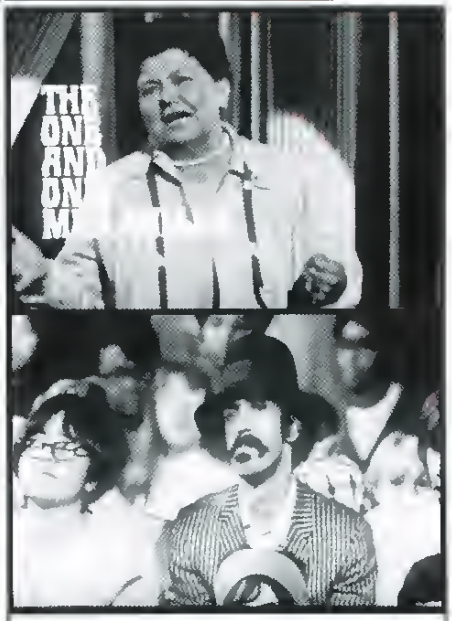
Something Weird Video DVD

I'm a sucker for compilations. Something Weird Video's *Rock 'N' Roll Rumble* had me glued to the TV for a solid two hours. The nostalgic collection is comprised mainly of late 1950's and mid 60's clips when rock and roll was in its celluloid infancy. I never realized how many films rock pioneer Alan Freed starred in. Even more astounding were all the appearances that Chuck Berry made in these films! Due to the success of The Beatles *A Hard Day's Night*, groups like Gerry and The Pacemakers, Herman's Hermits, the Dave Clark Five and Joey Dee and the Starlighters (now there's a shocker) were given their own productions, a regular 2 hour promotion in the form of music videos wrapped around a pointless story. What worked for the Fab Four didn't translate well on film for others. Even Bill Hailey and The Comets had two feature length motion pictures!



Other notable highlights include trailers for Phil Spector's *Big TNT Show* and its successor *The T.A.M.I. Show (Teen Age Music International)*. Both films feature a potpourri of classic acts (Ray Charles, The Rolling Stones, Donovan, James Brown, Marvin Gaye). We even get a peek at Frank Zappa (his *200 Motels* trailer is on *Rumble* also) sitting in the audience.

Some productions haven't weathered well in their old age. A terrible looking flick trying to capitalize on the short lived calypso fad, *Bop Girl*, does have one thing going for it—a band comprised of an incredibly dopey looking bunch named The Goofers!



Not only did Tina Turner appear in *The Big T.N.T. Show*, she also shows up again on the *Rumble* compilation as a spokesperson for Pearl Drops tooth polish. You'd swear she is having an orgasm as she licks her lips proclaiming how good her teeth feel.

We are also treated to rarely seen scopitones for *Wheel of Fortune* by Kay Starr, *Ruby Baby* by Dion and *The Night Has a Thousand Eyes* by Bobby Vee. Although far from eye catching, these promotional videos are still a visual treat, especially if you're familiar with the songs.

Frank Zappa and Mrs. Miller together on one collection? It doesn't get much better than this!

After seeing the trailer for *The Cool Ones*, I had to track the movie down. The 1967 feature is no more than a take off on popular shows like *Hullabaloo* and *Shindig!*, but it does have plenty going for it. Firstly, there's a cameo by Mrs. Miller (her voice sounds like Ethel Merman trying to sing while she's being strangled), performances by The Leaves (*Hey Joe*) and ex Beach Boy Glen Campbell. Add Roddy McDowell in a starring role and you can't go wrong!

Rock and Roll Rumble is not for everyone. But if you're looking for 60's music trailers, it's a great trip back in time.

Highly recommended.

Adam Bialek

VIRGINS FROM HELL

Directed by Ackyl Anwari
(1987) Mondo Macabro DVD

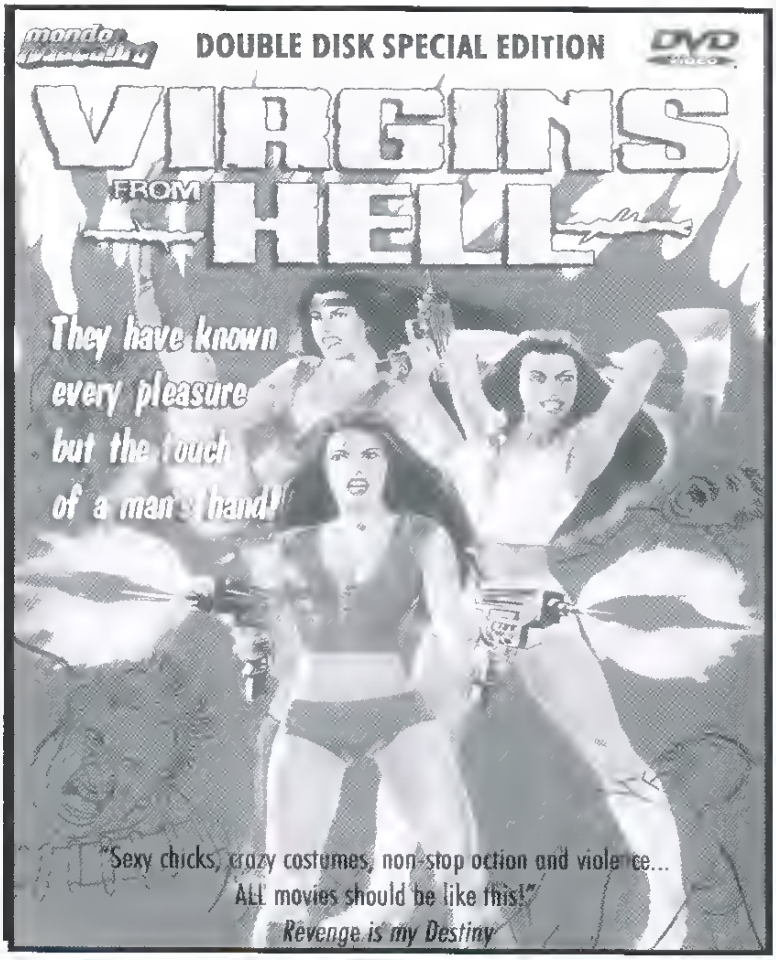
Ever since a friend loaned me a bootleg of a film that he absolutely, totally hated called *Mystics in Bali* (1981), this writer has rutted along sundry gray market paths in search of anything Indonesian. Converts to this particular brand of movie magic will vouch that the films from this far-flung land are like nothing else dreamed of in our philosophies. The fantasy and exploitation films of Indonesia are crude, but never ironic, attacking their lurid and questionable subject matter with a determination to entertain their audience at all costs. My search has since turned up quite a few gems, and there are quite a few movies in my collection that are in their native language, sans subtitles. I would go on to write two long, in-depth articles on Indonesian films for two other publications. I will even step on a few toes and say that comparable films from other nearby lands can only dream of matching the audacity of the projects emanating from this sprawling section of Southeast Asia.

And so it was with trepidation that I learned of Mondo Macabro's intention of bringing Ackyl Anwari's *Virgins From Hell* to the DVD format. My initial response was "what on earth for?" (Why not a domestic release of *Mystics in Bali*?) Indo films are not traditionally good, and well, *Virgins From Hell* isn't any good. No, seriously. In spite of hordes of scantily clad jungle babes riding around motorbikes and shooting off machine guns, these *Virgins* indeed make for a lousy date. Director Ackyl Anwari shoots everything from static long and medium shots, with no camera movement of any kind, leading to a very stilted and boring movie. The subject matter simply does not lend itself to an Andrei Tarkovsky-styled presentation.

Virgins does have unusual art direction, such as cave interiors sprinkled with glitter and shag carpeting used as wallpaper. But even the most patient viewer of cinema sludge will be checking their wristwatches for this feature to end. In both of my previous articles, I pegged *Virgins From Hell* as "the film to miss" on the Balinese trash film tour. The Johnny-come-lately who jumps on this bandwagon due to Mondo Macabro's superior DVDs of *Lady Terminator* and *Dangerous Seductress* may just want to jump off after encountering these very frigid *Virgins*.

However, as in most DVD purchases, it's the extras that make this an essential purchase. This two-disc edition features a plethora of exotic treats on display. On the first disc, along with a widescreen, restored version of the film, there is an essay on the women-in-prison genre, an essay by Pete Tombs on the background of the film, and the Mondo Macabro promo reel. On the second disc is the documentary *Destination Jakarta* about the Indonesian film industry, and a fistful of trailers for many other Indonesian genre pictures, ranging from serious war docudramas to the popular *The Warrior* series (with action star Berry Prima), to even more horror films that has thus far escaped my purview. The trailers vary drastically in quality, but you won't care. Pete Tombs wisely ends the trailer park with the one for *Mystics in Bali*, perhaps supremely confident that this film, above all others will lead countless other viewers such as myself down a rabbit hole to a most curious and wondrous cinematic wonderland.

Greg Goodsell



www.cinemawasteland.com

From ALIENS to ZOMBIES and ALL THINGS In Between!

CINEMA WASTELAND

MOVIE POSTERS - COLLECTIBLES
RARE DVD and VIDEO - T-SHIRTS
AUTOGRAPHS - TOYS & MORE!

GREAT SELECTION!
UNBEATABLE PRICES!

For A Complete MERCHANDISE CATALOG,
Send $3.00 USA & Canada ($5.00 Foreign):

Cinema Wasteland
PO Box 81551
Cleveland, OH. 44181

Phone (440) 891-1920 zombies@cinemawasteland.com

SERVING THE COLLECTOR (to Axe Wielding Madmen) SINCE 1987

* CELEBRITY GUESTS * NON-STOP MOVIES * DEALER'S ROOM *
* SPECIAL EVENTS * SURPRISES * AND MUCH, MUCH MORE! *

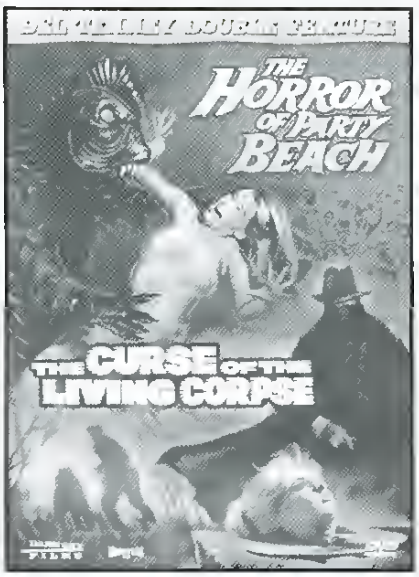
The CINEMA WASTELAND Movie & Memorabilia Expo,
Is one of the TOP RATED Movie Conventions in the Country!
Held Every April and October, Outside Cleveland Ohio. See our Web Site for what We have in Store for our Next Show.

DEL TENNEY DOUBLE FEATURE

THE HORROR OF PARTY BEACH and THE CURSE OF THE LIVING CORPSE

Directed by Del Tenney
(1964) Dark Sky DVD

What we have here is basically a sublimely stupid "high concept" combo which could be a retarded cousin to Frankie and Annette *Beach Party* opus! A cheapo creature feature potboiler of sorts, about a bunch of deadly grotesque zombie sea beasts created by foul toxic radioactive waste, carelessly dumped in the Atlantic ocean. The clawed, finny, googly-eyed, carnivorous monsters prey on hedonistic adolescents. They spoil the kids' fun by violently crashing a slumber party and provide a good chunk of belly laughs. Shot in three weeks in in Stamford, Connecticut, this hilariously idiotic lunacy comes complete with fumbling direction by Del Tenney. We are treated to atrociously wooden acting, guys in rotten rubbersuits (that try to pass as amphibious ghouls) who look like they have half-eaten hot dogs sticking out of their mouths! There's a bad-ass belligerent biker gang played by an actual motorcycle club (you know that they're really rough cats due to the fact that they all wear black leather jackets and matching dark sunglasses); shapely young chicks in skimpy bikinis; a degrading stereotypical superstitious old black mammy maid comic relief character, surprising dollops of fairly graphic gore; and, best of all, the sensationally smokin' New Jersey surf garage rock group the Del-Aires, who cut loose with a handful of spot-on stirring reverb guitar-rippin', shake, rattle, and roll-inducin' tunes, which include the truly deathless dance dilly "The Zombie Stomp" and the swoony romantic ballad "You Are Not a Summer Love."



Alas, *The Horror of Party Beach*'s dreadfully dull companion feature *The Curse of the Living Corpse,* dismally fails to recapture the gloriously manic inanity of this gonzo gem. This really stiff, static and stinky 19th century New England-set murder mystery thriller affair centers on a highly dysfunctional affluent family, who gather together to nab evil millionaire Rufus Sinclair's substantial fortune, after the horrible bastard is buried alive. Pretty soon various folks are being bumped off in assorted grisly ways, such as drowning; burning; beheading; suffocation; and so on. Has Sinclair returned from the grave to avenge his death? Or is someone else committing the brutal slayings? Despite decent lashes of semi-nudity and reasonably graphic gore, this talky clunker lacks the necessary spark to be much fun. It's most notable for being Roy Scheider's film debut, as well as *Carnival of Souls* star Candace Hilligoss's only other fright flick appearance. Dark Sky Films' double bill DVD makes the grade with pleasingly crisp widescreen prints, as well as a still and poster gallery. The wonderfully outrageous theatrical trailers are included, as is a comprehensive Del Tenney interview. There are satisfyingly casual, unpretentious and informative commentaries by Tenney for both movies.

Joe Wawrzyniak

THE MIDNIGHT BLUE COLLECTION : CELEBRITIES EDITION (2006) Blue Underground

Screw magazine founder Al Goldstein may be the biggest pervert on the face of the earth. Even ol' Larry Flynt can't hold a candle to him. Al's Manhattan access cable show *Midnight Blue* is now on DVD, courtesy of Blue Underground, who have unleashed 3 volumes of Mr Goldstein's smut for our viewing pleasure. The *Celebrities Edition* is the least explicit of the series, but I think it is the best of the bunch. Among the many highlights here are clips from the infamous Barbara Streisand porno film (no, it's not her), the Rob Lowe sex tape (it is him, but who cares) and the Go-Go's (they're wasted, fully clothed, and boring as hell).

"Eddie, I'll tell ya more stories about the old country later. Right now I've got an appointment with a magic mirror."

Between terrible commercials for everything from sex toys to threesome inquiries, are the interviews with celebrities, which really is the reason we're watching this disc. Blue Underground does not disappoint, as they've selected an eclectic mix of stars. Russ Meyer talks about his latest film *Beneath the Valley of the Ultra Vixens*, O.J. Simpson is interviewed dressed in a tux at 1979's Hooker's Ball, and Arnold Schwarzenegger bores us to tears talking about his bodybuilding regiment.

A young Gilbert Gottfried hams it up with Al, while Penn and Teller talk about the so-called magician's oath.

Tiny Tim stops by and talks about his past sexual experiences. When Al asks him if he has ever fondled himself, Mr. Tim replies "unfortunately, yes", but is quick to say that he asked his lord Jesus Christ to forgive him.

60's underground comic guru R. Crumb sits on his porch and waxes poetically about female exploration. He and Al agree that sensitive guys never get laid. The more assertive you are, the more women like you.

Former Blondie members Debbie Harry and Chris Stein seem to be thoroughly entertained by Al's raunchy questions. We don't learn much, other than Chris Stein only hangs with women, and that Debbie had several gay lovers.

The most entertaining interview is with none other than Grandpa Munster himself, the late Al Lewis. Lewis tells about his fantasy which involves a naked woman in front of a mirror while Al watches her face as he is . . . well, you get it—not a pretty sight.

The Blue Underground DVD features an added bonus which is reminiscent to VH-1's *Pop Up Video* show, where factoid blurbs appear on screen (an optional extra). They make an already entertaining show even more informative.

WIN A FREE DVD!

Courtesy of TARTAN ASIA EXTREME DVD AND SCREEM MAGAZINE

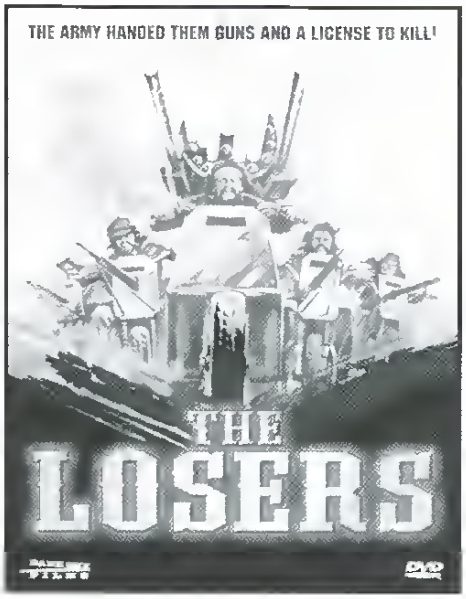
JUST ANSWER THIS EASY TRIVIA QUESTION!
WHO DIRECTED THE REVENGE TRILOGY?
(*SYMPATHY FOR MR. VENGEANCE*, *OLDBOY*, *SYMPATHY FOR LADY VENGEANCE*)
Believe it or not, the answer is in this issue!
Send your response to:
SCREEM-TARTAN GIVEAWAY
41 MAYER ST.
WILKES BARRE, PA 18702

25 LUCKY WINNERS WILL RECEIVE A FREE DVD FROM TARTAN FILMS. WE'LL POST THE WINNING NAMES IN SCREEM #13.

GOOD LUCK!

THE LOSERS

Directed by Jack Starrett
(1970) Dark Sky DVD



Well, it's about damn time this simply kick-ass bikers-go-to-'Nam 70's drive-in trash exploitation classic roared its angry way onto DVD—and it's given the deluxe treatment it so richly deserves. Rough and tumble hog-riding Hell's Angels hellions Link (the almighty William Smith), Duke (the equally awesome Adam Roarke), Dirty Denny (former real-life Green Beret Houston Savage), Speed (Gene Cornelius) and Limpy (a fine Paul Koslo) are recruited by the CIA to rescue an arrogant presidential adviser (expertly played to hateful and haughty perfection by director Jack Starrett) from the vile clutches of the Red Chinese in Cambodia.

Directed with his customary rip-snorting brio by the extremely underrated and always dependable Starrett (whose other credits include the Jim Brown blaxploitation vehicle *Slaughter*, the hugely enjoyable *Cleopatra Jones* and the Satan worshiper car chase knock-out *Race With the Devil*), this bang-up gutsy and thrilling little pip works like gangbusters. The pace storms along at a steady, speedy clip. The performances from the top-rate cast are uniformly excellent (it's a real treat to see biker pic perennials Smith and Roarke on screen together, plus longtime favorite Filipino fat guy Vic Diaz has a funny supporting part as a friendly automobile mechanic), and the incredibly explosive action sequences are staged with considerable incendiary aplomb (the big climactic raid on an enemy prison camp is a definite highlight). Moreover, the bikers themselves aren't glamorized or sanitized in the least. These dingy dirtball dudes are pure bad news. They are a scruffy bunch of mangy nonconformist malcontents, who are as likely to brawl with each other as well as anyone else who crosses their bitter antagonistic path. Better still, this remarkably bold pic fiercely critiques America's involvement in the Vietnam war, clearly stating that we hurt these people more than helped them (the subplot about the Vietnamese prostitute with a mulatto baby is particularly poignant and provocative). The fact that this defiant picture was made while the Vietnam war was still going on makes it that much more pertinent and resonant. And the crushingly downbeat bummer ending is likewise very powerful with both its unflinchingly cynical anti-government stance and unsparingly grim statement about the wasteful futility of war. *The Losers* was also influential in that it established the basic let's-bring-the-boys-back-home premise which was later reused in such 80's action features as *Uncommon Valor*, *Missing in Action* and *Rambo. First Blood, Part II*.

The Dark Sky DVD offers a beautiful widescreen presentation along with the following tasty extras: two radio spots, the theatrical trailer, a still and poster gallery, and, perhaps the single most savory bonus, a highly amiable, entertaining and informative commentary by Paul Koslo and William Smith.

Joe Wawrzyniak

MAREBITO

Dir. Takashi Shimizu
(2004)Tartan DVD

Chemically imbalanced loner Masuoka (Shinya Tsukamoto) earns a modest living as a freelance cameraman in Tokyo. A quiet man with the darkest fetishes imaginable, he is obsessed with all things macabre. His specific longing is to dissect the concept of fear and feel an unadulterated taste of it himself as he has long felt desensitized. While shooting some footage in the subway with a documentary television crew, Masuoka witnesses the suicide of a man named Kuroki (Kazuhiro Nakahara). Lucky enough to have the uncensored footage the networks were unable to air in his collection, he studies the suicide like a detective and concludes Kuroki did himself in because of something unspeakably horrific that he saw. Morbid curiosity compels Masuoka to descend into the depths below the subway system in search of answers to this mystery. Making his way through a series of subterranean passageways and caverns, he meets the dead Kuroki who philosophizes about underground cities and warns of supernatural entities called Deros. Nestled in the confines of some ancient ruins, Masuoka finds a mute girl (Tomomi Miyashita) shackled at the ankle and decides to bring her back to his apartment, naming her F. His new companion neither eats nor drinks, moves about unnaturally, and sleeps most of the day. It doesn't take long before Masuoka learns she is not human.

Right before filming the American remake of *Ju-On: The Grudge*, director Takashi Shimizu shot *Marebito* in an astonishing eight days! While not carrying the same fright factor as captured in his *Grudge* series, *Marebito* is full of horrific imagery and heavy on atmosphere. Chiaka Konaka's screenplay as adapted from his own novel plunges the viewer into a netherworld of immense foreboding. The Detrimental Robots (called Deros for short) make only sparse cameos, unable to compete with the sheer terror of Neil Marshall's creatures in *The Descent*. Shimizu accomplishes some miraculous things on a much smaller budget this time around due to inventiveness and creativity. The visual highlight is when Masuoka arrives at the Mountains of Madness, which are populated by unearthly stalagmites and stalactites. Many scenes are temporarily shown through the point of view of Masuoka's video cameras. The shakiness and grain of the cinematography is mostly dispensed in small doses and unlikely to make the viewer seasick the way *The Blair Witch Project* affected many.

Shinya Tsukamoto, the director of such films as *Tetsuo* and *Tokyo Fist*, plays an unusual and sometimes ambiguous lead. It's easy to feel sympathy for a man living in such alienation, especially when attacked by a belligerent stranger who happened to cross the path of his camera while in record mode. In this instance, Masuoka seems to be pretty harmless. At another point, during which he scrutinizes the authenticity of a snuff movie, Masuoka ponders that it would be worth his while to imitate a psychopath just for the benefit of recording the terror of his victim on both his video tape and retina. At such points he is thoroughly lethal and in serious need of a straight jacket. Tsukamoto imbues the troubled Masuoka with a sick voyeurism. Tomomi Miyashita has the more awkward role of F. Incapable of communicating the traditional way, she skillfully relies on body language and alternative modes of expression. Miyashita moves around monstrously like an experienced contortionist.

Marebito continues Tartan's fine tradition of well produced Asia Extreme titles. Supplements include interviews with Takashi Shimizu, Shinya Tsukamoto, and producer Hiroshi Takahashi along with the never dull Tartan trailers. *Marebito* won't be remembered as Shimizu's finest work to date, that distinction arguably belongs to his original Japanese version of *Ju-On: The Grudge*. Never feeling like a rush job, *Marebito* is an accomplished picture that challenges the viewer to think while being genuinely scared.

Adam Bialek

Disturbing Art for Disturbing Times...
SCREEM COVER ARTIST
Bill Chancellor
(915)592-2886
bchancellor@earthlink.net
CHAN
CELL
ORO6

DEMON HUNTER

Directed by Scott Ziehl
(2005) Anchor Bay DVD

The Catholic Church has a secret employee receiving unspecified under the table wages to do their dirty work. A half human, half demon warrior, Jake Greyman (Sean Patrick Flanery of *The Boondock Saints*) offers specialized training. Overtime is commonplace as the primary responsibility is to exterminate all manner of demons, be it routine possessions or other infernal manifestations rearing their ugly heads. Asmodeus (Billy Drago, Jupiter in the 2006 remake of *The Hills Have Eyes*) the Demon of Lust slithers into town with a plan to impregnate as many women as inhumanly possible. He is quickly growing bored with the Los Angeles prostitutes at his disposal rendered incapable of carrying his evil seed. Cardinal White (William Bassett from *House of 1000 Corpses*) decides to give Jake a partner, Sister Sara (Colleen Porch), to ensure his mission runs smoothly. Several rounds of underworld skirmishes pave the way for the main event: a fateful showdown with Asmodeus and his omnipresent Succubus (Tania Deighton) to save the human race, or at the very least Southern California.

Demon Hunter reeks of made for television product from start to finish. Haphazardly stitched together with sloppy editing, it plays out as a rushed affair. Director Scott Ziehl (the 2001 remake of *Earth VS the Spider*) directs the picture into a dead end oblivion. Inept special effects, especially the wince inducing CGI, backfire like defective fireworks. The Succubus was likely intended as a dark erotic character. Paste on looking devil horns and exaggerated fangs which make the actress prone to speech impediments reduce her to a ridiculous Hot Topic caricature. It would be quite the challenge to find a nun coming out of the convent like Sister Sara. Toned abs coupled with breast and lip implants present her as a second tier Angelina Jolie. Sean Patrick Flanery and Billy Drago are slumming it in this schlockfest. Flanery imbues his character with a cynical antihero edge, striving to make the most of the material albeit often appearing bored in the process. Drago always manages to ooze menace with minimal effort, famous for such varied roles as Al Capone's enforcer Frank Nitti in *The Untouchables* (1987) and a recurring demon guest star on *Charmed*. Even though he spends the entire film either engaging in deviant sex, spouting threats of eternal damnation, and demonstrating superhuman strengths - the performance is sadly a walk through. Phony as the glimpses of simulated lovemaking may be, the fight scenes are of an even lower caliber. Jake fights not unlike a new school WWE wrestler, rumbling with the female demons just as crudely as their male counterparts. Had more time been spent on fight choreography, there could have been some potentially exciting action sequences .

The distressing bottom line is that *Demon Hunter* has little if any of its own identity, thus bringing nothing new to the table. It's excessively derivative of commercially successful genre films such as *Blade*, *Constantine*, *End of Days*, *John Carpenter's Vampires*, and numerous others. A more original screenplay could have fueled a more inspired action horror hybrid and could have better exploited the talents of the eclectic cast.

Adam Bialek

LET ME DIE A WOMAN

Directed by Doris Wishman
(as Louis Silverman)
(1978) Synapse Films DVD

While this writer is a hardened viewer of the most extreme examples of stuff captured on film and video, Doris Wishman's documentary on transsexuals, *Let Me Die A Woman* never fails to make slightly nauseous. These tired old eyes has seen everything the most callous news photographer has captured along with the most extreme examples of pornography on the planet, and still . . . when ol' Doris focuses her camera on these desperately sad characters, some long-hidden barometer of social responsibility within my being cries "enough!"

The reasons for this are complex. Transsexuals have long since entered the mainstream since *Woman* was shot, providing reliable fodder for afternoon TV talk shows. And still . . . Wishman's blunt, exploitive approach to the subject matter is cringe-worthy. It must be due in part to Wishman's lack of sympathy for her subjects and indeed, for humanity in general. After all, did Wishman approach Chesty Morgan's 73-inch breasts with taste and restraint in *Deadly Weapons* (1974) and *Double Agent 73* (1974)? Her blunt, artless approach is exemplified in the title—let me die!

Let Me Die A Woman opens with Leslie, the chatty Puerto Rican transsexual that is the film's anchor. Leslie awakes, puts on her makeup and begins to dress while her heavily accented off-screen voice coos, "I love clothes." Looking straight into the camera she declares "Last year . . . I was a man!" The film's title comes on to the blare of canned music. After a series of pasteboard graphics, we are introduced to Dr. Leo Wollman (not a skid-row bum as many previously theorized, but a real if dubious doctor) who becomes our tour guide through the world of transgenderism. The film's disjointed narrative flits in between Wollman, Leslie bragging of her own real-life experiences and dramatic re-enactments, one of which is some hapless schmuck taking a chisel to his wang clamped in a vise.

And those transsexuals—many are in more need of a speech therapist than gender reassignment surgery! The ones we spot in Wollman's support group are either refugees from a mental hospital (check out the one with a knit cap, filthy hair and nerd specs!), the sorry souls spotted in the Baltimore sex change clinic that Mole McHenry disrupts in John Waters' *Desperate Living* (1977) or actors from a distaff production of "Charlie's Aunt!" God help us all! The film is elevated from most Wishman fare in that she chose to shoot some scenes in sync sound, but the film overall is outré even by her standards.

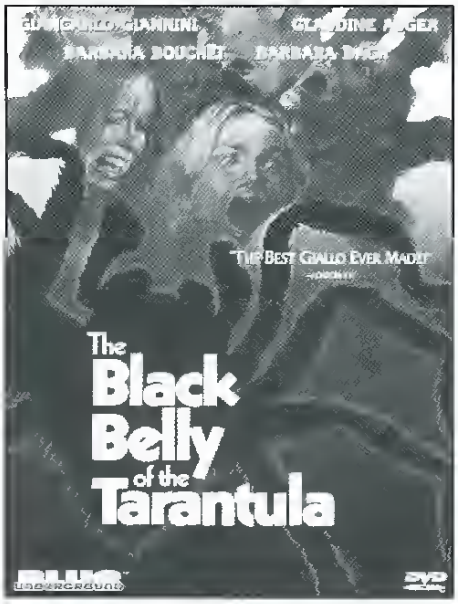
It stands to reason that this inglorious feature would warrant an up close and personal view courtesy of the digital age, and Synapse Films has risen to the occasion with a special "Transgendered Edition." The result is an example of being the best a terrible film will ever look. It's been lovingly restored to widescreen with color corrections, but rest assured there's no making a silk purse out of some sow's ears in some shots. In addition to the film's theatrical trailer, promotional spots and a title sequence that suggests the film first began production in 1971—there's a priceless commentary track from Wishman authority Michael J. Bowen—and hold on to your hats—Leslie herself! Leslie is a great commentator, with a seemingly endless supply of bitchy bon mots, one-liners and astute observations. She goes on to say at length how Wishman promised her the moon and never delivered, how Wollman was definitely not a surgeon but worked as sleazy hypno-therapist and counselor to some pre-ops and the general stop-start nature of the production. We also learn many tidbits such as the sleazy john who picks up a TV hooker in Central park at the beginning of the film is none other than Gaylord St. James, the guy who played the vengeful father in Wes Craven's *Last House on the Left*!

While Leslie admits that she regrets having the operation (as a born-again believer, she wants to be a man in time for the Second Coming in order for Jesus to recognize her) her breezy delivery seems to affirm that there is much more to life than gender, sexuality and Doris Wishman. Synapse Films' DVD release of *Let Me Die A Woman* is a must-have for sleaze aficionados, and with the commentary track left on, an unexpected life-affirming delight.

Greg Goodsell

THE BLACK BELLY OF THE TARANTULA

Directed by Paolo Cavara
(1971) Blue Underground DVD



Still feeling the ecstasy of a top dollar full body massage, Maria Zani (Barbara Bouchet) is confronted by her understandably furious husband Paolo (Silvano Tranquilli) over a revealing photo with an unknown lover. The couple recently separated over her promiscuity. A heated argument rages on, after which Maria decides to spend the evening alone. Later that night a prowler sporting latex examination gloves stalks her and injects an acupuncture needle laced with wasp poison into her spine. This renders paralysis as Maria is utterly defenseless and forced to watch her own hellish demise. With a domestic life currently in a state of disarray, the unseasoned Inspector Tellini (Giancarlo Giannini) is assigned to the case. For all his diligence and around the clock dedication, he quickly senses that he has chosen the wrong vocation to pursue. As the killings increase, a pattern emerges with all of the victims being clientele of an exclusive beauty spa run by Laura (Claudine Auger). Further clouding the truth is a tangled web of complex blackmail schemes and a drug trafficking ring importing tarantulas from the Far East encased in cocaine disguised as sand. Tellini does not realize the grave imminent danger surrounding him until learning the killer has set sights upon his wife Anna (Stefania Sandrelli).

The Black Belly of the Tarantula has much in common thematically with the Mario Bava classic *Blood and Black Lace*, universally acknowledged as the first giallo. In Bava's flick, elite models are methodically selected for murder at a prestigious fashion salon concealing secrets of sex, drugs, and blackmail. Director Paolo Cavara, one of the guilty parties responsible for the infamous trash "documentary" *Mondo Cane*, summoned forth a work of originality that avoids emulating the Bava style despite the numerous similarities found in the stories. *Black Belly of the Tarantula* is unique in that the narrative is shown primarily from the point of view of the detective. When the emphasis shifts to the murderer, an imaginative method of disposal was dreamt up by the collaborative writing team of Marcello Danon and Lucile Laks, despite the repetitive nature with each victim. While the action dwells more on the detective, the events never disintegrate into overly talkative melodrama. Cavara's taut direction keeps the audience on edge, particularly in the rooftop chase sequence. The only liability to the screenplay is its overly linear plot lacking the countless twists one is accustomed to in the giallo. The motive for the slayings is pretty mundane compared to the more ornate screenplays of Ernesto Gastaldi brilliantly captured in such films as *All the Colors of the Dark*, *Case of the Scorpion's Tail*, *Death Walks on High Heels*, and *The Strange Vice of Mrs. Wardh*.

Law enforcement figures are generally given short shrift in giallos. Inspector Tellini is one of the best developed policemen in genre history in contrast to the one dimensional clueless variety all too familiar. Giancarlo Giannini (whose recent outings include *Casino Royale '06*, *Hannibal*, and *Darkness*) breathes tremendous life into the part as he is equally shrewd, intuitive, and driven by determination. The strength of his character really ignites in the finale. A man of normally reserved disposition, Tellini explodes with violence and emotion inflicted mercilessly towards the killer. *Black Belly of the Tarantula* boasts quite the cast of international beauty queens from assorted James Bond and Euro Horror cinema. Barbara Bouchet (*Casino Royale '67*, *The Red Queen Kills 7 Times*) is unrivaled for her truly uninhibited performance as Maria. Barbara Bach (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, *Short Night of Glass Dolls*) has the least significance to the story other than add to the collective glamour. Stefania Sandrelli (*Devil in the Brain*) is given the most depth of all the women and elicits much greater sympathy. A further selling point is the music of Ennio Morricone. Using eclectic instruments and an avant garde style of composition, his music heightens the film's mood swings and mounting tension. Morricone's score is every bit as effective as his work in Dario Argento's *Bird with the Crystal Plumage* and *Lizard in a Woman's Skin* from Lucio Fulci.

Blue Underground once again brings forth a stellar restoration in all of its uncut glory. The only disappointment is the lack of bonus materials. A fifteen minute interview with Lorenzo Danon (son of the writer and producer) includes some colorful bits of trivia particularly regarding Barbara Bouchet, but feels lackluster. It would have been much more interesting to see the participation of any principal cast members and hear their stories also. Putting a fresh spin on familiar material, *The Black Belly of the Tarantula* is a stylish film that deserves reappraisal rather than pondering where it should be placed on the list of all time giallo greatness.

Adam Bialek

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! DROP US A LINE AT:
SCREEM MAGAZINE
41 MAYER ST.
WILKES BARRE, PA 18702
OR SEND US AN E-MAIL AT
SCREEMAG@AOL.COM

Editor's Note:

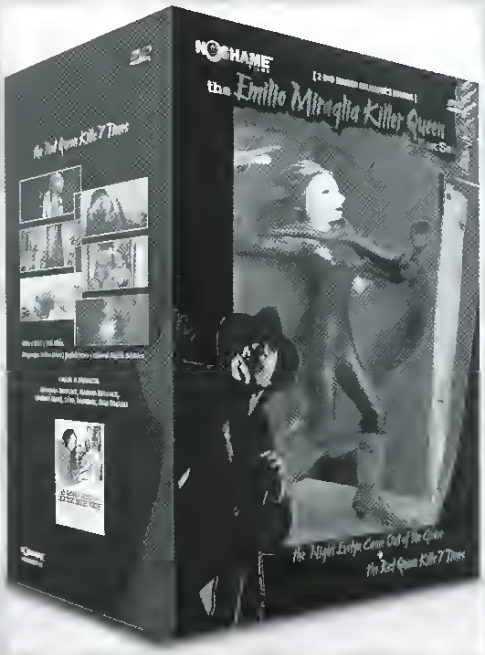
Our mailbox was very busy the last few months! We've received many "glad to have you back" greetings, as well as "where were you?", and "I've just picked up my first issue of *Screem*, but it certainly won't be the last . . ." mentions. This issue was crammed with articles, and as much as I wanted to print all the wonderful letters, I had to sacrifice them until the next issue. However, with what little space I have, I'd like to say thank you so much for the positive response! It's what makes me want to continue this publication. We already have a lot of goodies lined up for *Screem* #13, and with a little luck, it'll be on your local newsstand just in time for Halloween. See you then!

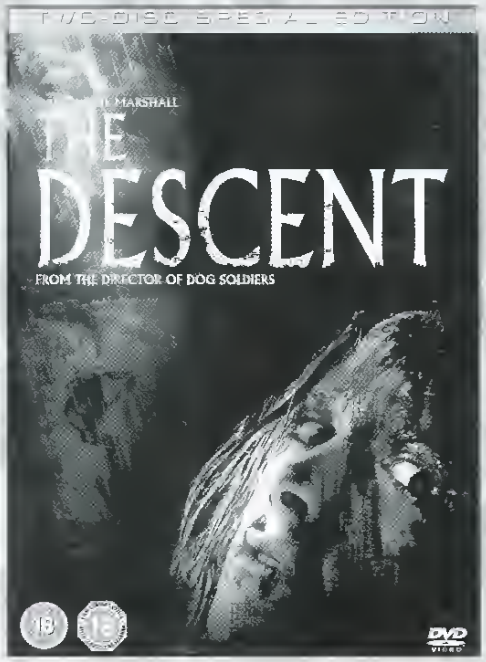
ADVERTISE IN SCREEM!
Phone (570) 592-8125
For more information.

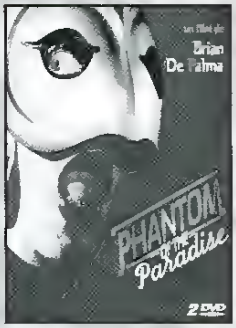
XPLOITED CINEMA

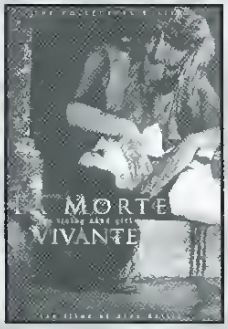
www.xploitedcinema.com

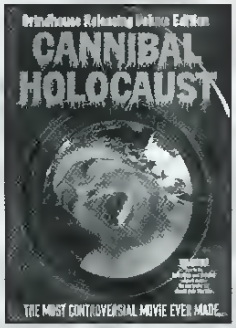
SPECIALIZING IN IMPORT AND DOMESTIC CULT AND HORROR DVDS

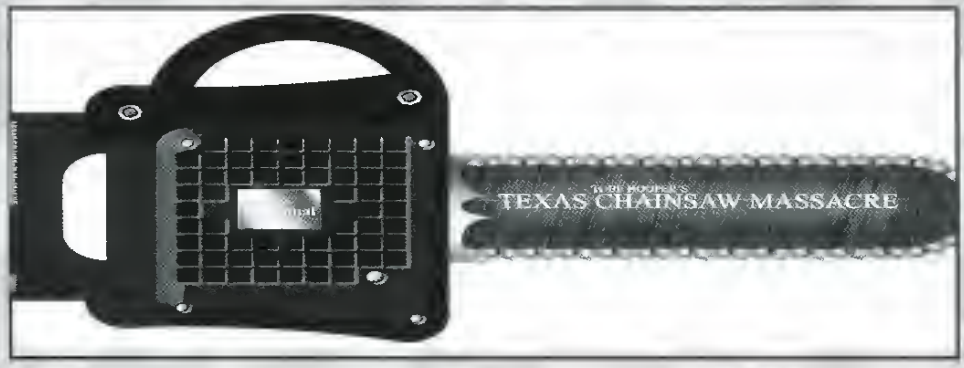


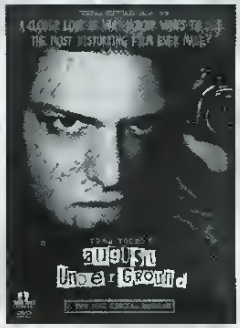












THE ANNIVERSARY

Director: Roy Ward Baker
(1968) Anchor Bay DVD

The 1960's ushered in the golden age of what became known in Hollywood as the "Batty Old Dames" movies—a genre unto itself, epitomized by the one-two powerhouse combination of Bette Davis and Joan Crawford in Robert Aldrich's *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* While the tale of a grotesquely faded former child star and her bitter, crippled sister could have provided compelling entertainment in Aldrich's hands even with a cast of unknowns, there was simply no substitute for the sight of two genuine, established Tinsel-town glamour queens tearing apart their own popular images—while simultaneously strengthening their already impressive acting credentials. However, while the genre continued to spotlight such stars as Crawford (*Strait-Jacket*) and Shelley Winters (*WhoSlew Auntie Roo?*), it was Davis who received the greatest acclaim for her roles in Aldrich's *Hush . . . Hush, Sweet Charlotte*—and especially Seth Holt's *The Nanny* (a Hammer film co-produced by 20th Century Fox).

The Nanny didn't really fit into the "Batty Old Dame" category, as this stark psychological thriller contained neither "camp" value nor histrionics on the part of its star—but Davis had once again retained her genre crown with her portrayal of a dangerously disturbed domestic. Both Hammer and Fox were understandably anxious to work with Davis again—and Jimmy Sangster's adaptation of Bill MacIlwraith's stage play *The Anniversary* became their vehicle of choice. The result was one of the least typical Hammer films ever.

In brief, *The Anniversary* gives us Shirley Blair (Elaine Taylor, the wife of actor Chnstopher Plummer), on the verge of marrying into the wealthy Taggart family(who made their fortune as building contractors). She is about to meet her future in-laws, as they all converge on the estate of the family matriarch. In turn, Shirley's fiancé Tom (Christian Roberts), introduces her to his brothers Henry (James Cossins) and Terry (Jack Hedley), and their families, as they prepare to celebrate the annual observation of the wedding anniversary of their late father, and the very-much-alive Mother Taggart (Davis). So far, so good . . . but it doesn't take long for Shirley to realize that Mother Taggart likes to keep all three of her sons on an extremely short leash. The secret (and not-so-secret) shames of Henry and Terry provide Mother with ample psychological ammunition to keep them in check. Shirley figures that if she and Tom are to enjoy an independent existence, she'll have to try to beat Mother at her own game. BAD IDEA! As Terry's wife Karen (Sheila Hancock) futilely tries to warn Shirley, Mother can find *anybody's* weakness . . .

Neither Sangster nor director Roy Ward Baker (who replaced TV director Alvin Rakoff when Davis declared him inadequate for the task) failed to realize what was necessary to transform the one-set stage production into a legitimate cinema experience (though many of the original stage cast reprised their roles for the film). As one might expect, the adaptation frequently "opens things up" and moves outside the confines of the Taggart estate—but the filmmakers also realized that a key plot device required a far different approach on film than could be used on the stage. In the play, it isn't until well into the action that Shirley gleefully announces her discovery of Mother Taggart's "wonky eye," thinking that this physical imperfection is just what she needs to turn the psychological tables on the domineering matriarch. But a stage actress doesn't have to worry about faking a glass eye for the benefit of an audience that never gets a close-up—things are quite different in the movies, particularly when you have Bette Davis! Therefore, the cinematic Mother Taggart makes her grand entrance in a glowing ensemble--with matching dress, hair, lipstick . . . and eye patch! (The patch isn't seen in the play before the second act.) Similarly, the quick, neat punch-line of the stage original was significantly expanded here, as it wouldn't have been nearly enough to wrap up a Bette Davis vehicle.

And make no mistake—as director Baker was informed by a Fox executive, this was not a Hammer film, nor was it a Fox film . . . it was a *Bette Davis film*, and all that that entailed. Beyond that, *The Anniversary* defies classification. Despite its Hammer pedigree, it cannot be considered a horror film (some potentially shocking moments are deliberately staged off camera, allowing the reactions of the performers to speak for themselves)—and yet no genre enthusiast could let it go unacknowledged. And while it's filled with pitch-black humor (lying about children dying in a car crash is just part of the game for Mother Taggart, for instance), "comedy" isn't the word for it, either. It doesn't even follow the "Batty Old Dame" rules (even though the genre Davis helped create is exactly what made this film possible)—Davis, despite her convincingly pathetic portrayal of a has-been years earlier, is restored to pure cinematic glamour here as she plays a character who may well be a monster, but who is most assuredly neither insane nor deluded. As a result, *The Anniversary* slipped through the cracks, failing to deliver what fans of either the studio or the actress expected from it . . . but biding its time for rediscovery.

To that end, Anchor Bay has supplied a fine-looking print of the complete version (the film was slightly shortened in its original American theatrical release)—the crucial colors are glowing and the sound is flawless. But best of all (especially for Hammer fans) is the inclusion of a feature-length interview/commentary with both Jimmy Sangster and Roy Ward Baker. Naturally, much of this track is devoted to the details of what it was like to work with Davis (not to mention the advantages of being on her good side)—the bottom line is that she was extremely demanding but that she proved herself to be completely worth it with her performance. But there is far more to be discovered as the behind-the-scenes story of *The Anniversary* unfolds.

It's not *Baby Jane*, and it's not Hammer Horror, but anyone reading this magazine ought to know that it's theirs for the taking.

Shane M. Dallmann

SYMPATHY FOR MR. VENGEANCE
SYMPATHY FOR LADY VENGEANCE (aka LADY VENGEANCE)

(2002/2005) Directed by Chan-wook Park
Tartan Asia Extreme Region 1 DVD
Region 2 import DVD

"I am in blood stepp'd in so far that should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er."
--Macbeth, Act III, Scene IV

By now, you've noticed that I'm only covering two-thirds worth of Chan-wook Park's "Revenge Trilogy" here. It's not an accident. As Park's *Oldboy* (2003) received the greatest attention and acclaim (not to mention theatrical distribution) in America, I saw it well ahead of the others and thus completely within its own context. And when I caught up with the trilogy's "bookends," I found them well worth examining as their own companion pieces.

Although the title hints at a strong thematic relationship, *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* is nothing like the *Death Wish* series of films, which ultimately encouraged viewers to root for Charles Bronson's bereaved vigilante, satisfied that he was delivering true justice. This is a tragedy in the true Shakespearean sense—and in the meantime, it's every bit as gruesome as *Titus Andronicus* itself.

A CliffsNotes version of Korean water torture, courtesy of *Sympathy For Mr. Vengeance*.

Ha-kyun Shin stars as Ryu, a deaf laborer recently relieved of his position by wealthy magnate "President" Dong-Jin Park (Kang-ho Song). Ryu's sister is dying of a kidney ailment and is in desperate need of a transplant. As his own kidney is incompatible, and as he cannot afford to pay for the operation, Ryu relies upon a black market organ donor network to provide him with a compatible kidney in exchange for one of his own (as well as the rest of his savings)—but the racketeers take the money (and the kidney) and run. At this point, Ryu's revolutionist girlfriend Cha (Du-na Bae) convinces him that the abduction of President Park's young daughter Yu-sun (Bo-bae Han) would solve all their problems. Her powers of persuasion are remarkable—after all, they're not going to harm the girl, Park won't miss the money, and the reunion of the girl with her family will strengthen their relationship that much more. What could possibly be more right—and what could possibly go wrong?

Without going into the (gory) details, everything that *could* go wrong does, leaving us with two central protagonists overburdened with grief and guilt. Neither of them *wanted* to hurt anybody, and neither *wants* to go on doing so, but each is convinced that it must be so—and the viewer will find it impossible to take sides (while the title indicates a single person, the film creates sympathy for more than one "Mr. Vengeance"). But is there vengeful satisfaction to be had? There *are* genuine villains (the organ racketeers) to be dealt with, and Park does allow an opportunity for extreme catharsis when their (beyond repulsive) deeds catch up with them ("It's in an artery—don't take it out!"). But this is no fifth-act bloodbath—the story must be settled between the two main characters, leading to a finale that's equal parts grisly (I would suspect that Eli Roth saw this just before he made *Hostel*) and tragic—no one will leave this film with a satisfied smile.

The on-screen gore and violence will make this an extremely difficult view for many, but Park's poetic direction and the bold, convincing performances of the cast command audience involvement throughout—a less dedicated filmmaker could have depicted the same story and made something truly unwatchable out of it, but Park proves that the story is, indeed, worth telling.

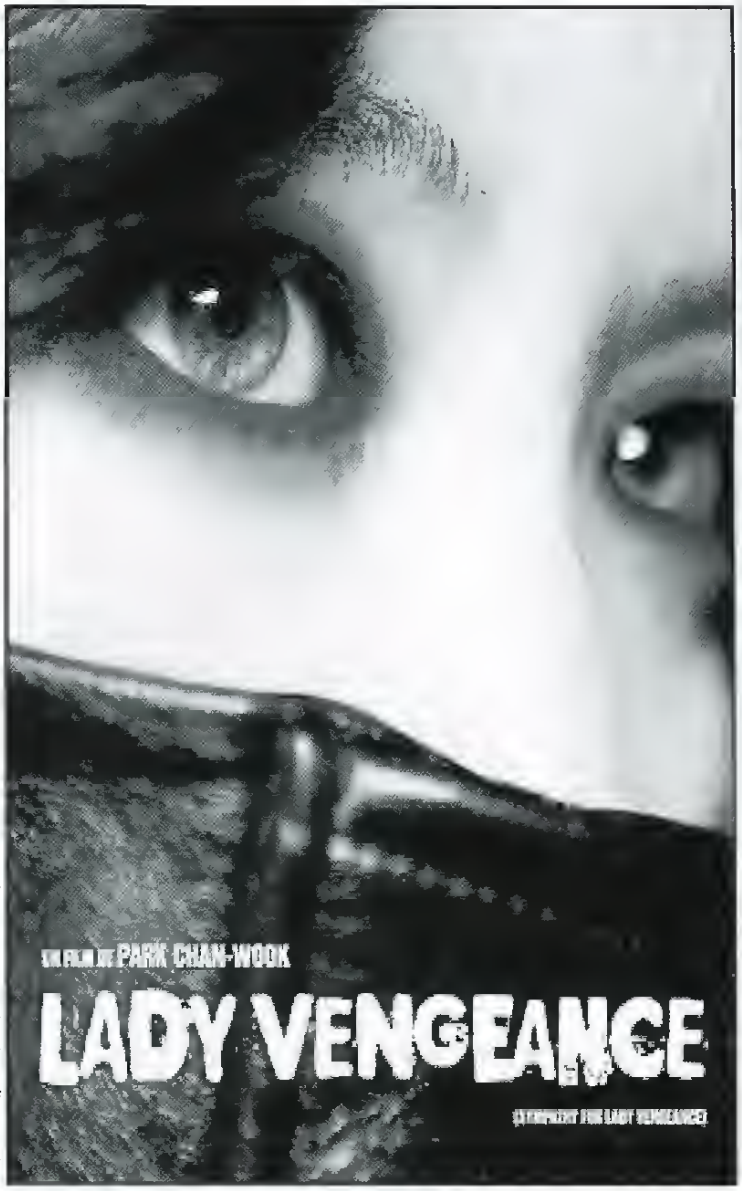
Here's the couple voted most likely to kidnap a child in their school yearbook.

Mr. Vengeance leaves no room for a sequel, and Park's "Revenge Trilogy" shares no characters (although many cast members do encores). The art-house hit *Oldboy* took on a life of its own in U.S. theatres (if you haven't seen it, do so before the American remake comes out—the Indian remake has already been released). Unlike *Mr. Vengeance*, the second film in the trilogy offered exhilarating action sequences between bouts of grisly torture, provided a mystery (why is this happening and who is truly entitled to revenge?); and allowed the audience to believe that a triumphant conclusion was actually possible. The themes of kidnapping and vengeance are again at hand, but it's Park's 2005 *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* (to be known simply as *Lady Vengeance* in the States) that truly dovetails with the first entry.

Yeong-ae Lee stars as Geum-ja Lee, who was sentenced to prison at age nineteen for her role in the abduction and murder of a young boy. The rationale for the kidnapping is explained in the exact same terms as those suggested by the Cha character in *Mr. Vengeance*—but in this case, while Geum-ja certainly shares responsibility for the kidnapping itself, she is actually innocent of the murder. Her confession to the crime lets the true culprit, Mr. Baek (*Oldboy*'s Min-Sik Choi) off the hook, but she takes the rap for the sake of her own infant daughter, who is then given up for adoption. In prison, Geum-Ja earns the nickname of "The Witch"—not only is she presumed to be a child murderer, but she ultimately accepts the responsibility of killing certain fellow inmates for the protection of others.

But now Geum-ja has been released, having "paid her debt" for the crime she didn't commit while remaining unpunished for her true actions. She would like to find her own long-lost daughter—but meanwhile, there are many other parents in the neighborhood who have irretrievably lost their own children to a murderer. How would it be if Geum-ja could get them organized and provide them with the opportunity to actually lay their hands on him?

While the subject matter is even more immediately devastating than that to be found in the previous entries, *Lady Vengeance*, quite surprisingly, contains the least amount of graphic violence. We are once again asked to consider if there is any true satisfaction to be found in revenge—it may be one thing to kill a perpetrator in hot blood when catching him in the act, but what if he's been beaten and bound to a chair for one's convenience years after the fact? Geum-ja leaves that decision to the parents of the victims—though she's the only one in the room who could conceivably be reunited with her own child, she has resigned herself to the brand of "The Witch," and nobody else's choices can change that. As the true criminal himself sadly admits, "There's no such thing as a perfect person." The film opens and closes with the symbolic offering of a white cake—in the beginning, it's a traditional token of renewed innocence for the just-released prisoner, who strikes it to the ground. But in the end? See for yourself.



The eyes have it. Yeong-ae Lee's peepers have seen their fair share of trouble. From Park Chan-Wook's *Sympathy For Lady Vengeance*.

Here are a few words of wisdom for our male readers:
Never lose your head over a chick.

Director Park shifts stylistic gears yet again, but just as effectively. If *Mr. Vengeance* was a Shakespearean tragedy and *Oldboy* was a mystery-thriller with shocking twists, the nearest comparison for *Lady Vengeance* may be found in the films of David Lynch (surreal animated effects and dream sequences enhance the story throughout, with Geun-ja's fantasy revenge upon what appears to be a hybrid of Mr. Baek and a sled-dog standing out in particular). Those seeking gore are bound to be disappointed (Shakespeare just might have classified this one as a comedy!), but this is nonetheless essential viewing for anyone affected by Park's previous work. One just might say that even though Geun-ja refuses it, *Lady Vengeance* takes the cake.

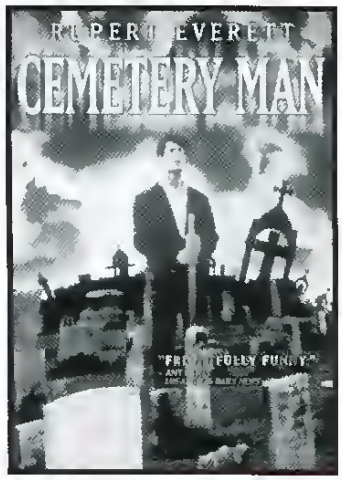
Tartan Asia extreme has already released *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* and *Oldboy* in DVD packages loaded with commentary tracks, trailers and other extras. *Lady Vengeance* will follow shortly—this review was based on a viewing of a Region 2 import DVD only, but there is no reason to doubt that Tartan's upcoming DVD will be of equally fine quality.

Shane M. Dallmann

DVD QUICKIES

Brief reviews and DVD News

New DVD label Discotek Media (the folks who gave us last year's *Zero Woman : Red Handcuffs*) are back with a slew of great DVDs, among them *Sexy Soccer, Burst City, Puss 'N' Boots, Mikadroid, Bye Bye Jupiter, Electric Dragon 80,000V,* zombie flick *Sars Wars* and *The War in Space*. We at *Screem* are most excited about Discotek's upcoming *Blind Woman's Curse* starring Meiko Kaji. On a related Meiko note, we're happy to see that *Beast Stable* and *Grudge Song* (the final two Kaji films in the *Female Convict Scorpion* series) are available now from Media Blasters.



Fans nostalgic for Saturday morning TV will be thrilled to know that Sid & Marty Kroft's *The Bugaloos* complete series is just out on Rhino DVD as well as those talking chimps from the world of *Lancelot Link. Lancelot* is brought to you by Image Entertainment of Battlecreek, Michigan ...oh, wait a sec, Image is California based... Speaking of Image, check out their *Lon Chaney Jr. Collection*, which is comprised of four of Lon's previously hard to find films : *Manfish, The Golden Junkman, Lock-Up* and *The Indestructible Man* . . . what, no *Face of the Screaming Werewolf??*

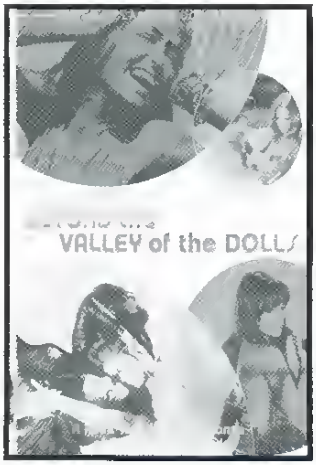
Our friends over in Europe have *Tarantula, The Incredible Shrinking Man, The Other* (1972) and *Doctor Goldfoot and the Girl Bombs* on DVD . . . alas, we entertainment starved Americans without all region players are out of luck . . .

Dark Sky DVD continues to impress with their latest batch of titles. They've unleashed two collections of Drive-in Double Features (complete with concession stand spots and trailers!) for *Creation of the Humanoids/War Between the Planets* and Sonny Chiba's *Invasion of the Neptune Men* and 2nd feature *Prince of Space*. Both are an incredible bargain at $14.95 per double feature. Look for Dark Sky to bring us the Amicus studio titles *Asylum, And Now the Screaming Starts* and *The Beast Must Die* this summer.

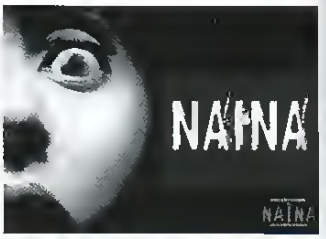
Thank you Anchor Bay! Although it was on their release schedule for the longest time, many of us expected *Cemetery Man* to stay buried in the DVD M.I.A. section for an eternity. The U.S. edition has several differences compared to the Italian *Dellamorte Dellamore* disc on the Medusa label. For starters, there's a 5.1 English audio mix, trailers and a documentary titled *Death Is Beautiful : The Making of Cemetery Man,* which contains new interviews with director Michele Soavi and actress/model Anna Falchi. Future Anchor Bay offerings include *Warning Sign, Damnation Alley, The Manitou, The Evil Within* (a.k.a *Baby Blood*) and Takashi Miike's *Imprint*, the unaired Showtime episode from the *Masters of Horror* series.

New from Lion's Gate Entertainment are *Tamara, Cannibal, Graveyard, Return of the Living Dead : Necropolis, BTK Killer, 3 Extremes II, 2001 Maniacs,* and *Swarmed.*

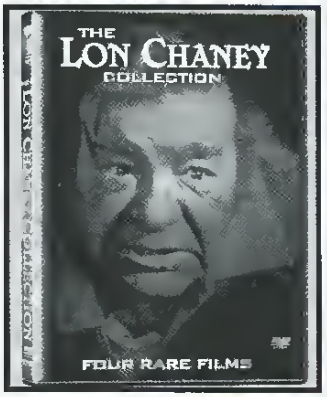
John Waters has recorded a new commentary track for Paramount's Joan Crawford bio pic *Mommie Dearest.*



Russ Meyer's *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* was one of the most requested titles in the vault at 20th Century Fox. Although it has been available as an import, the U.S. edition is a 2 disc set, and is loaded with plenty of extras. Disc one contains the feature film and two commentary tracks—one by *Dolls* co-writer Roger Ebert, and another by the film's cast. The 2nd disc contains screen tests, several featurettes and a psychedelic scrapbook!



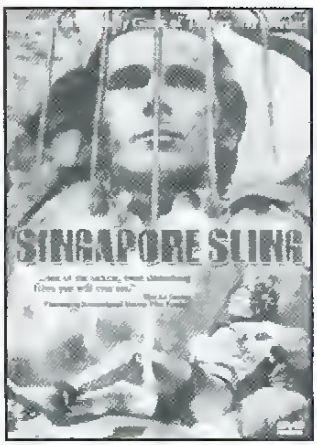
TV Party was the brainchild of writer Glenn O' Brien, who turned his Manhattan access cable show into a gathering place for some of New York's best new wave/avant garde acts. Co-hosted by Blondie's Chris Stein, the guests on this "best of" documentary include Debbie Harry, Robert Fripp, Klaus Nomi, Mick Jones and Fab Five Freddy. Certainly worth a look, if nothing else. Find it at www.brinkfilm.com.



Music Video Distributors latest batch of DVD biographies showcase an eclectic mix of artists. Kate Bush, Captain Beefheart, The Velvet Underground, Syd Barrett and The Smiths are given the retrospective treatment in MVD's *Under Review* series. None of these discs were authorized by the artists, however, completists may want to check them out just to see some of the rare music videos and TV clips that pop up.

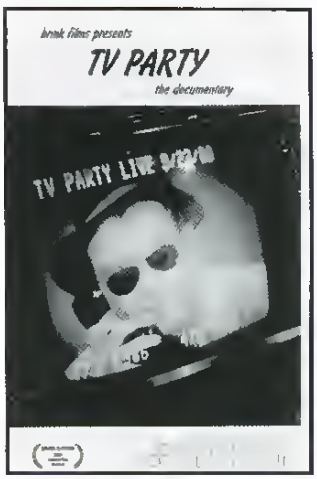
On 42nd Street Pete's list of the 13 Sleaziest Films in *Screem* #11, *Singapore Sling* was mentioned as not being available on DVD. I'm happy to report that is no longer the case. You can now find it from Synapse Films.

Bollywood films are notorious for copying U.S. blockbusters, but I thought it odd to see the Hindi take on The Pang Bros. *The Eye*. *Naina* mimics the film in every way.

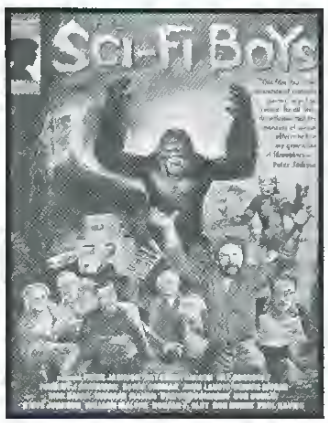


If you're a junkie for 1960's TV, you won't want to pass up BCI's *Ultraman* Season One 3 disc box set. Purists will be happy to know that the programs (20 in all for season one) utilize the original Japanese language track (with English subtitles). For nostalgia buffs, the English dub audio is here too.

Cinema Sewer's *Retard-O-Tron DVD Mixtape* is certainly not something you'd want to play as background entertainment at a party (unless the crowd is composed of 17 year old boys). Most of what we see is for shock value. Some of it works, but nothing on this DVD is dull. Certainly "adults only" fare, the disc will make you think "I cannot believe what I just watched" more times than not. You can buy the actual disc for $12.00, or download it for free! Find it at cinemasewer.com



A fitting tribute to *Famous Monsters of Filmland* creator Forry Ackerman can be found on The *Sci Fi Boys*, a fun documentary issued by Universal Pictures. Along with Forry, SF pioneers Ray Bradbury and Ray Harryhausen built the way for a new generation of imagi-filmmakers. Praises are sung by the men who carry the torch from the mighty three. Peter Jackson, John Landis, Roger Corman, Rick Baker and other known names in the field weigh in with accolades. There's a genuine love for these three men, all of which are in the twilight of their years and each still has a curious little boy lurking inside their hearts. Wonderful stuff!



SCARE WEAR!

New SCREEM Tees are here!

FULL COLOR DESIGN!

Available in women's medium (babydoll)
MEN'S M - L - XL - 2XL* - 3XL*

ONLY $15.00

PLUS $3.00 postage
*2 and 3 XL sizes are $18.00

Quantities are limited!

Send check or money order to:

SCREEM MAGAZINE
41 Mayer St., Dept. T.
Wilkes Barre, PA 18702

We accept PayPal!

Send PayPal payments to:
Screemag@aol.com

Send us one dollar for our shocking illustrated Unearthly Video DVD catalog....

...or we will be forced to have Captain Katya put you on her rack!!!

So what's in the catalog? Descriptions of 1,000s of genre features, many with color illustrated picture boxes!

And new releases are regularly added to our inventory [DVD and/or VHS] in updates mailed free to your habitat! PLUS: Free movies! See catalog for details!

Shocking master catalog $1 [18 years or older]

Adult catalog $1 [21 years or older]

So don't torture yourself! Have Katya do it! Send check/m.o. & signed age statement to:

UNEARTHLY VIDEO DVD

Dept. M, P.O. Box 681914
Orlando, FL 32868-1914

UV-DVD@wmconnect.com

DARK SKY FILMS LIGHTS UP YOUR NIGHT WITH HARDTOP HEADLIGHTS, MONO SPEAKERS, AND STEAMY WINDOWS WITH THIS TEMPTING TRIO OF DRIVE-IN DVDS.

Starring James Karen (*Superman Returns*, *Return of the Living Dead*). Martians Princess Marcuzan (Marilyn Hanold of *The Brain Who Wouldn't Die*) and bald pointy-eared Dr. Nadir (Lou Cutell of *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*) blast down humanoid android Frank Saunders' rocket. With a face half burnt off and a damaged computer brain, Frank(enstein) rampages uncontrollably through Puerto Rico as the Martians abduct bikini-clad women to repopulate their dying planet. Rivals *Plan 9 from Outer Space* for sheer head-turning amazement. Includes 16-page essay on the film by writer George Garrett, theatrical trailer, still gallery.

Both Drive-In Features include Drive-In Intermission Ads and Theatrical Trailers!

CREATION OF THE HUMANOIDS

A catastrophic nuclear war leads mankind to construct a race of blue-skinned androids, "Clickers," to rebuild civilization. Fearful of the robots' quickly evolving intelligence a fanatical group, The Order of Flesh and Blood, attempts to preserve their own rule. But are the robots really man's enemy, or his last hope for survival?

WAR BETWEEN THE PLANETS

Director Antonio Margheriti (*The Last Hunter, The Young, The Evil and the Savage*) offers a barren planet set on a collision course with Earth. A team of scientists is sent to counter the impending Armageddon, but after landing on the wayward planet they discover that it has a bloodthirsty life of its own.

INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN

SONNY CHIBA'S FIRST FILM!

Space Chief (Sonny Chiba) thwarts nefarious Neptunian invaders from their planned conquest of Earth with his space car and a group of geeky boys.

PRINCE OF SPACE

The Prince of Space (Wally the shoeshine boy in disguise) and his rocketship plan to save the world, or at least Japan, from total conquest by the evil Phantom and his beak-nosed minions. An MST3K favorite.

DARK SKY FILMS | www.darkskyfilms.com